THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 14 January, 1932 Number 1

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V. I. LENIN

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

1932 — Capitalist Gloom — Proletarian Confidence — Practical Tasks—No Single-Line Perspective—International Situation —Increasing Imperialist Antagonisms—Prospects of 1932—The Crisis and the Revolutionary Line

WHAT is the future of the world crisis in 1932? This question is now in the minds of all. The world situation is indeed black and menacing to all who cannot see with the eyes of revolutionary understanding whither this inevitable destruction and chaos is leading, and can only lead. The laws of capitalist evolution to ever-increasing misery and ruin work themselves out with relentless completeness—all the more completely and relentlessly for every delay of the sole action that can turn the tide and bring in a new world, the action of the proletarian revolution. Look at the capitalist world to-day. Production still falls. Unemployment still rises. The sinister contradiction of ever-advancing technical power and simultaneously advancing poverty confronts capitalism with the accusing question it cannot answer. What is the only answer of capitalism? The only answer of capitalism, of all its National Governments, Brüning emergency régimes, Hoovers, Lavals and fascist dictatorships, is to drive the masses still further down, to impose new burdens, to restrict consumption, to dragoon and repress the rising resistance, to fight like wild beasts for survival. The capitalist states face one another in war array, armed with emergency powers, hurtling their tariff decrees against one another, fighting for trade, fighting against each other's trade, fighting over debts and reparations and gold, straining every nerve in that imperialist strategic conflict which precedes armed conflict. Tariff-war and imperialist rivalry abroad; repression and starvation decrees at home: this is the answer of capitalism to the crisis—to pour oil on the raging flames. In ever greater contrast to this fiends' madhouse stands the rising world of socialist construction, of

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the Soviet Union. Alone the Soviet Union maintains the magic circle of its pacific " cordon sanitaire," across which the plague of the capitalist economic crisis strives vainly to pass; maintains a world of sanity, peace and construction, in the midst of the howling anarchy, destruction and war of the capitalist world. How long will this contrast, unparalleled in history, be able to continue unassailed? Capitalism is ever more openly snarling and baring its teeth, to break through this pacific " cordon sanitaire " by guns and gas-bombs, by the only language it understands, even though knowing that such criminal provocation may signal its own end. For this, too, we must be prepared. But for the moment, to-day, the great contrast still stands in conditions of a formal peace, pointing the way forward for the whole of humanity, while there is still time, before the work of capitalist destruction has reached yet more desperate heights.

WITH unconcealed gloom and apprehension the capitalist statesmen and economists peer into the perspectives of 1932. If the capitalist states cannot reach " a comprehensive and firm settlement " in the immediate future, declared MacDonald in his Guildhall speech, " the world will go from bad to worse until collapse and revolution may be the only way out "; " next month we may enter the fringe of the storm area." The Brüning Government proclaims its fourth emergency decree of December as " the final effort " of German capitalism. " Within the next two months," Sir George Paish, the Cassandra of capitalist economists, prophesies " a complete breakdown," if the present line of direction continues. The alleged letter of Montague Norman to Moret, reported in an American journal, registering a prophecy of the " wrecking " of " the capitalist system " within a year, is well-known. " The finance-wizards must take care "; solemnly warns the new " Professor of Industrial Relations " at Cambridge University, John Hilton: " they had blundered Europe to the brink of Sovietism, and if they did not better learn to control their magic, the present industrial system would go. With what we saw of capitalist economy before

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our eyes, and with what we could foresee of the consequences of further bungling, there was a lot to be said for Sovietism; and it would be said, and would be listened to. Either that, or we should relapse from industrialism. If finance could not do its job, we might have to choose between Moscow and the desert." (*Times*, November 24, 1931.)

HOW much significance should we attach to these voices of gloom and doom from the capitalist statesmen and economists? Let us beware of setting our compass by their feeble rushlights. Revolutionary Marxism sees further, and knows further, into the real workings of capitalism and its outcome, than they have yet begun to get a glimmering of; saw and spoke long before, while they were still in the clouds, were still prattling of immutable economic laws and unlimited expansion and the nature-rooted permanence of a merely historical category. They still see exactly as far as their noses, and no further; when they have received a blow on the nose, they realise that they have received it, that it hurts, and that all is not well with the world—but that is the measure of their wisdom. The more daring surmise that it came from a fist. With infantile superficiality they see only questions of "finance," "finance-wizards" and "bungling" as the cause of the crisis; they understand nothing of the workings of capitalism. In consequence, they move up and down with every surface phenomenon. The general decline of capitalism, the character of imperialism, the character of the whole post-war period is a closed book to them. When capitalism moves a little upwards, as five years ago, they are in heaven—the American Miracle, Final Disproof of Marxism, Ford the Prophet of the Future, a Paradise for the Workers. When capitalism moves down and even begins to lay bare some of its deeper break-up, their heart drops to their boots; it is the end of the world. The present crisis is in fact far greater and more fundamental than they yet guess. But our perspective of it is not theirs. We know that the overthrow of capitalism is no such simple matter; that it requires the most titanic and long-drawn struggle, action, organisation and

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victory of the working class; and that until this is attained, capitalism will still drag on from crisis to crisis, from hell to greater hell. To the utterances of doom of the capitalists, therefore, we do not look for our perspective. What these utterances reveal is the consciousness of the capitalist class, the consciousness of their approaching end, the guilty consciousness of a damned and doomed system, of a dying class. So much the more do these utterances of despair of the capitalists only give to the proletariat the great confidence and determination. The facts of breakdown which bring despair to the capitalists bring hope to the proletariat.

"That which hath made them blanch, hath made me strong;
What hath quenched them, hath given me fire."

WHAT, then, is our perspective? Our perspective is most certainly of the inevitable breakdown of capitalism; but it is grounded differently and far more deeply than theirs. Their twittering fears of breakdown are based solely on the colossal character of the present crash, are hedged about always with an "if"—"if the present line is followed," "if a different line (as recommended in my book, *The Money Chaos and the Way Out*, or *Social Credit*, or *Europe's Crisis and the Remedy*, or *England's Salvation*, or *Empire Unity*, or *A Plea for a World Currency*, or *World Anarchy and World Planning*, &c., &c.) is not followed." But we say that, *whatever line* is followed by capitalism, the outcome under the conditions of capitalism is and can only be, whether the path be short or less short, renewed and greater contradictions, and greater crisis, until in the final outcome the proletariat, finding no other path, steeled in rising struggles, grown to full consciousness of its task, carries through the final overthrow of capitalist class power and monopoly, and begins the building of a new world. But for this very reason we do not build all upon *a single line* in the immediate outlook. Our outlook is at once far more iron in its certainty of capitalist downfall than all these doom-prophecies, and at the same time far more elastic in its handling of the immediate situation. We

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know that the struggle is a varying struggle, and that there are alternative possibilities within a single governing process. Marxists have often been accused of being religious millenary fanatics. In fact it is just these supposed learned and scientific pundits of capitalism who, under the shock of the crisis, have suddenly revealed their infantilism by becoming like religious millenaries. We do not say: "Capitalism will break down on such and such a date"; and so, as the caricature has it, call on the faithful to await the "far-off divine event." On the contrary, we do not concern ourselves with such speculations. We declare instead: "The complete bankruptcy of capitalism is already confronting us, and calling urgently for the historic task of the proletariat to overthrow it. The key to this task lies through the development and strengthening of the immediate struggle against the capitalists, and leading it forward to the revolutionary battle for power. The urgency of the crisis only makes these tasks the more urgent." This is the simultaneously *scientific* and *practical* outlook of the revolutionary proletariat in the face of the crisis.

WE need, in other words, to beware of the error of the single-track perspective, that sees one side of contradiction and not the other; of seeing capitalism as a passive process running along a fixed groove to a predestined point and then full-stop, instead of as a *continuous struggle* of opposing living forces and complex contradictions, in which only the driving force of the contradictions makes the final outcome inevitable; of imagining that the capitalist class enemy has only one policy, the one we credit him with, and will not take advantage of every mistake, hesitation and weakness of the proletariat. On the contrary, every mistake and weakness has to be paid for at a heavy price in the prolongation of the life of capitalism. The doom of world capitalism—that was already pronounced by history in 1914, and renewed in 1917. But the execution of the verdict requires the executioner. The proletariat in Russia, under the leadership of its Bolshevik Party, was ready. But in Western Europe the social roots of imperialism had struck

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deep within the proletariat, and had their reflection in Labour and social reformist politics. Therefore capitalism in Western Europe, despite its extreme chaos and breakdown, did not pass from the scene, but was painfully built up again after a fashion. To-day the experience of fourteen years has done much to break the hold of Labour and social reformist illusions. The weakening of the fabrics of imperialism, the dwindling of super-profits, the consequent ever-renewed offensive against the workers, and worsening conditions, compel a new outlook. Labour Governments have been tried and found wanting in a host of countries. The present crisis has forced this process forward in Europe and America. In Britain the fall of the pound, and the fall of the Labour Government, have opened a new phase. The conditions gather for advance. But there is still dangerous weakness and falling short of the issues of the crisis. There is still heavy upward work to mobilise the fighting front even against the capitalist attacks directly arising from the crisis. Capitalism still holds the initiative.

UNDOUBTEDLY the capitalist statesmen and governments will make the most intense efforts to counter the crisis and its extension, the menace of which is obvious to them, and to find at any rate some measure of alleviation, so far as is consistent with their particular conflicting interests. 1932 is marked out for a whole series of international conferences directed to this end. The frozen credits in Germany, debts, reparations, the gold standard, tariffs, Versailles, and disarmament—all these questions press simultaneously with merciless insistence. All these questions are themselves only the outer forms of the deeper imperialist antagonisms, which conduct their fight through these forms, above all, the three-cornered battle of New York, London and Paris. What is likely to be the outcome of these negotiations and conferences? At present the deadlock is extreme. Britain presses, in continuation of the line of Chequers and the London Conference, for the complete cancellation of all war debts and reparations, and the release of its dearly-needed credits in Germany; at the same time it fights desperately with the

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weapons of pound depreciation and of tariffs to strengthen its weakened position and to press the pace against the gold countries, France and the United States; thus it presents simultaneously the visage of the enlightened international philanthropist, and of the most bellicose nationalistic combatant. The United States, from whom the Hoover moratorium was originally far more of an extorted gesture than a voluntary one, fights at present with increasing vehemence to maintain the weapon of its war-debt claims; and shows increasing indisposition to take part in any wider conference for which Britain presses. France, still strong in its gold and strategic advantage, fights to maintain its full rights and priority of reparations and the whole system of Versailles; and this time no longer under the pressure of financial undermining from Britain and America which compelled retreat in 1924, but able to bring down the pound and even shake perceptibly the dollar. Meanwhile, Germany reaches the limit of tension and the menace of breakdown; and a whole series of countries prepare to file petitions in bankruptcy. The prospects of any pacific international settlement are certainly at the present far from rosy. On the contrary, the strain and conflict rises every month.

BUT as the conflict rises, and the crisis extends, the weapons, the fortunes and the relative positions of the combatants shift and vary with increasing suddenness; and sharp changes must be looked for as on the order of the day. Six months ago at Chequers British capitalism, in alliance with Germany, secured an undoubted temporary advantage in extorting the Hoover moratorium, which was hailed with hosannas of delight in Britain as the beginning of a new era. But the London Seven-Power Conference saw the fiasco of the British cancellation policy in the face of combined French-American opposition; the credits were left frozen, and not liquidated. The collapse of the pound followed; British Imperialism was weakened as never before, and was faced with the shrivelling up of its influence in Europe, disintegration in the Empire, the currency of every Dominion

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following its independent line, and severe internal strain. Germany had to draw in its horns, abandon the Austro-German Customs Union project, and enter into humble negotiations with France in the Brüning-Laval conversations. Italy dropped its previous bellicose tone, and Mussolini began to make pacifist speeches. France dominated Europe more completely than ever before; and France and the United States, the triumphant survivors of the gold scramble, registered their victory and fidelity to the god of gold (but not their unity beyond this) in the Hoover-Laval Memorandum. But then a sudden change of scene begins. British Imperialism in desperation, opens a reckless fight with the weapons of the depreciation of the pound and of tariffs. At the same time the Nazis make enormous advance in Germany, and enter into open relations with British Conservatism (supporting the British thesis on debts) and with Italy, with increasingly outspoken opposition in all three countries to Versailles. Japan passes off the gold standard. France and the United States, alone on their mountains of gold, begin to view the situation with increasing alarm; talk even develops in a section of the United States bourgeoisie in favour of passing off the gold standard, in order the better to conduct commercial war. The United States holds out to Britain the possibility of some concession in respect of the British debt. Britain, with bargaining weapons once more in hand, renews overtures to France, and opens out once again its old line, ever since the Balfour Note, of a united European debtors' front against the United States. Such is the stage of gathering conflict in every direction which greets the opening of 1932.

THIS deadlock cannot continue long in the present form. Sharp changes and new developments are certain to take place. The possibilities that present themselves are varied. *Either* Germany may reach the point of break-up, of actual civil war, or of a new stage of crisis; a Nazi Government or a Nazi Coalition Government may come to power, and may endeavour to present a *fait accompli* on reparations, in agreement with Britain and Italy, and possibly, though

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more doubtfully, with the United States, and may in turn meet with French opposition and even with French armed opposition. This is not yet the most likely; since French predominance is strong, and Nazi policy shows an increasing tendency to recognise this and draw in its horns, seeking only a dictatorship by permission of international imperialism, and dropping its former bombastic promises. *Or again*, French present superiority may yet secure a more lasting success, and secure a form of European " settlement " after its own pattern, liquidating the German credits with the capital which it holds in abundance, and in return compelling acceptance of its terms from Germany and Britain, and drawing Germany increasingly into its sphere. This could only mean an extension of Versailles and all its consequent contradictions, and increasing antagonism of the United States, with at the same time closer drawing of the front against the Soviet Union. *Or again*, United States policy may take a new turn. The Presidential elections are likely to result in a Democratic victory, leading to a renewed more active role in European questions; the French elections may be organised to register a corresponding change of government and even possible re-emergence of some form of " left bloc "; and a new extension of international credits to liquidate the immediate deadlock may be hailed as a great " international constructive victory," repeating the era of Dawes. This is, however, now far more difficult to accomplish than in the Dawes phase; since every additional new loan, imposed on top of the old tribute, if this is not settled, or even on top of the old private debts, only adds to the net problem of repayment and final instability. *Or again*, under the stress of the intensifying commercial, tariff and exchange war, the United States may (it is not yet likely) try the dangerous experiment of a temporary inflation, leading a world inflation, thus raising the world price level, and creating a short-lived " boom," which will enormously accelerate the imperialist fight and advance to a crash. *Or, finally*, as the strain and antagonisms increase, any one of a hundred " incidents " or regional conflicts may

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light the conflagration and let loose large-scale war as the grand "solution," or the launching of the long-prepared offensive against the Soviet Union.

DO any of these manifold alternative lines and "solutions" mean that the basic crisis is solved? Obviously not. The general crisis passes from one phase to another, and at each point to what in its working out is revealed —whatever the temporary fluctuations and ups and downs— as a more intense phase. The general crisis of capitalist decline cannot be solved. The basic antagonisms drive forward with increasing force. Only the action of the proletariat can cut the Gordian knot, can finally solve the antagonisms. When Lenin declared that no situation for capitalism is "without a way out" ("auswegslos" in the German expression), he did not mean that the contradictions of capitalism can be solved. He meant that, until the proletarian revolution overthrows capitalism, it is inevitable that capitalism, whatever the extremity of its chaos and breakdown, will drag on, will of necessity find its own "way out," from form to form, from stage to stage, with increasing misery and renewed contradictions—until the proletariat acts. The only "proof," he declared, that a particular situation of crisis is "without a way out" for capitalism can only be—"practice," the success of the proletariat revolution. Any other "proof" of a supposed "absolute" collapse of capitalism is "empty playing with words." In short, Lenin was giving a *spur*, not a *brake*, to revolutionary action. This is plain enough, and sufficient answer to those reformists who have had the insolence to endeavour to distort Lenin's expression in order to "disprove" the revolutionary line on the crisis and to "prove" their own policy of a successful solution of the crisis and reconciliation of capitalist contradictions. What, then, is the lesson for the working class in relation to the present particular crisis in whose midst we find ourselves? Not to waste time to listen to the bourgeois and left reformist (I.L.P.) speculations as to whether or not this is the "final collapse of capitalism." Still less to listen to the bourgeois and reformist

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pratings of a hundred capitalist solutions (cancellation of debts and reparations, currency and credit reform, planned economy, &c.), and supposed harmonious reconciliation of capitalist contradictions. But to *utilise the present intense and still increasing particular crisis for the maximum revolutionary purpose*, to press forward the active struggle, to build the workers' fighting front, to awaken the workers to the meaning of the crisis and the issues before us, and to prepare for the big battles and responsibilities that 1932 holds before us. Along this path we shall still hope from the present particular crisis and its outcome to " prove " the final collapse of capitalism.

R. P. D.

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CONCERNING OUR REVOLUTION

By V. I. LENIN

[*The following article was written by Lenin during his illness in January nine years ago. Though one of his most brilliant pieces of Marxist Dialetical writings it has hitherto been but little known to British readers. It is appropriate to re-publish it this month, the eighth anniversary of his death.*]

I.

DURING the last day or so I have been perusing the writings of Suchanov[1] on revolution. What is most striking here is the pedantry of all our petty bourgeois democrats, as well as of all the heroes of the II. International. In addition to the fact of their being terribly cowardly, that even the best of them live on reservations—apart from this peculiarity of all petty bourgeois democrats which they continually expressed during the whole revolution, is their slavish inclination to imitate the past.

They all call themselves Marxists, but conceive Marxism in an impossibly pedantic manner. They have completely failed to understand the decisive factor in Marxism, *i.e.*, its revolutionary dialectics. They have even failed completely to grasp and even to notice the dictum of Marx that in the moment of revolution the greatest possible elasticity is required. Thus, for instance, the remarks of Marx in his correspondence —I believe during the year 1865—in which he expressed the hope of a connection of the peasants' war in Germany, which could give rise to a revolutionary situation, with the labour movement—even this explicit statement they seek to evade, and go round and round it like a cat round a plate of hot soup.

In their whole attitude they openly appear as cowardly reformists who are afraid of turning their backs on, or even breaking with the bourgeoisie, and who at the same time seek to hide their cowardice with empty phrase-mongering and boasting. But even from a theoretical point of view their absolute incapability to grasp the tactics of Marxism, is most strikingly shown in the following :

Up to now they saw a definite way of development of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy in Western Europe, and cannot imagine that this way cannot be regarded as a model example, even with certain alterations

[1] N. Suchanov (N. Gimmer) former Narodnik, later Menshevik, author of several works on the agrarian question and *Observations on the Russian Revolution* to which Lenin here refers. He was one of those indicted in the Menshevik trial last year.

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(which, regarded from the point of view of world history, are of no importance whatever).

Firstly, there is the question of a revolution which is connected with the first imperialist world war. With such a revolution, new or altered features must become apparent (these altered features being a result of the war, because there has never been before such a war under such conditions in history). Hitherto we have seen that the bourgeoisie of the richest countries could not restore " normal " bourgeois conditions after this war. But our reformist petty bourgeois, who pose as revolutionaries, regarded and still regard normal bourgeois conditions as the final impassable limit, whereby they conceive this " normality " in an extremely stereotyped and narrow-minded manner.

Secondly, they are quite strangers to the idea that, with the prevalence of universal laws regarding the development of world history, isolated phases of development, which constitute a peculiarity in the form or in the series of this development, are not excluded but on the contrary are highly probable. And it never even occurs to them that Russia, which lies between the civilised countries and those countries which for the first time have been dragged into civilisation by the war, the countries of the entire East, the ultra-European countries, was bound to reveal certain peculiarities which naturally lie upon the general line of world development, but which distinguish the Russian revolution from all previous revolutions in West European countries, and to some extent introduce certain novel phenomena into it as a result of its contact with the Eastern countries.

The conclusions which they have learnt by rote during the development of Western European social democracy, and which consist in the assertion that we are not yet ripe enough for socialism, that with us—as various " learned " gentlemen among them have expressed it—there do not exist the objective economic premises for socialism, are, for example, fearfully stereotyped. And it never occurs to anybody to ask: could a people who were faced by such a revolutionary situation, a situation which arose in the first imperialist war, could this people, under the influence of the hopelessness of their situation, not plunge into such a struggle which would open to them at least some prospects of capturing more favourable conditions for the further growth of civilisation ?

" Russia has not reached such a stage of development of the productive forces as would render socialism possible." This is the sentence with which all the heroes of the II. International, among them of course, Suchanov, are strutting round, decorated with it like a peacock's feather. They repeat this indisputable statement in a thousand tones. But it seems to me that it is not decisive for the estimation of our revolution.

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What now, if the peculiarity of the situation of Russia had first driven it into the imperialist world war, which involved all the more influential West European countries, if this peculiarity of the situation drove its development to the confines of the revolutions of the East which were beginning and had partly already begun, and had subjected it to such conditions as rendered it possible for us to realise that contact of the " peasants' war " with the Labour movement, concerning which such a " Marxist " as Karl Marx wrote in 1865 of its being a possible prospect in regard to Prussia ?

What now, if the complete hopelessness of the situation, which increased tenfold the forces of the workers and peasants, offered us the possibility of another means for the creation of the fundamental prerequisites of civilisation than was available in the other West-European states ? Would the general line of development of world history be thereby altered ? Would this change the fundamental relations of the most important classes in that state which had been and was being drawn into the general course of development of world history.

If the creation of socialism requires a definite level of culture (although nobody ventures to say of what nature this definite level of culture should be), why should we not begin beforehand with the revolutionary capturing of the prerequisites for this definite level, and then proceed further upon the basis of the workers' and peasants' power and of the soviet régime to catch up to the other peoples ?

II.

You say that the creation of socialism requires civilisation. Very well, why could we not create beforehand such conditions for civilisation as the clearing out of the big landowners and the Russian capitalists and then begin to proceed towards socialism ? In what books have you read that similar changes are not permissible or are impossible in an ordinary historical period ?

I believe it was Napoleon who said : " On s'engage et puis on voie." Freely translated this means : " One must first plunge into a serious struggle, one will then see what is next to be done." We also in October 1917, have plunged into a serious struggle and we have then seen such details of development (regarded from the world-historical point of view, they were undoubtedly details) as the Brest-Litovsk Peace, the New Economic Policy, &c. And to-day there no longer exists any doubt that we have practically gained the victory.

Our Suchanovs, not to mention the social democrats who are still more to the Right, do not even dream that any revolution is possible at all. Our European petty bourgeois never dream that the further revolutions in the incomparably more densely populated countries of the East,

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in which incomparably more peculiar social conditions prevail, will offer them much greater peculiarities than the Russian revolution.

Nobody disputes that a text book written in the method of Kautsky was very useful in its time. But it is high time to give up the idea that such a text-book has foreseen all the forms of development of the further history of the world. It would be high time simply to declare those people who hold such an opinion as fools.

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THE GOVERNMENT OF HUNGER AND WAR

By WILLIAM JOSS

THE British bourgeoisie, driven to desperation by ten long years of economic crisis, has formed its National Government. The credit crisis in Austria and Germany in July of last year shook British finance to such an extent that the Labour Government were appalled by the magnitude of the crisis. Despite their willingness to enforce economies to the extent of £56,000,000 at the expense of the working class they had to make way for a ruthless dictatorship which would attempt to ride roughshod over the working class.

There is even yet a considerable under-estimation of the depths of the crisis amongst workers due, in part, to the attempts of the Labour Party and I.L.P. to mask the deep decay of British imperialism and to envisage the advent of the National Government as a deep-laid plot to gain parliamentary power at the expense of the Labour Party. And this is the rôle which the Labour Party and I.L.P. play in order to hamper the development of the revolutionary struggle of the working class which is the only way out of the crisis.

The development of the world economic crisis has revealed the growing weakness of British capitalism and the credit crisis with the devaluation of the £ is the beginning of the flight to bankruptcy. A number of factors which stand out prominently are, the loss of revenue from capital investments abroad which undermine the parasitic basis of British imperialism, the progressive decline of the basic industries (coal, iron and steel, engineering and textiles), the rise of new competitors in industrial production and world trade in the post-war period, the tremendous problem of marketing German reparations, the accumulations of gold in France and U.S.A. and the breakdown of the Gold Standard are all driving the bourgeoisie forward in their mad race to escape the contradictions of their system. The repercussion of these economic and financial factors finds political reflection in the National Government. It was the intensification of the crisis which brought all the class enemies of the workers together under the slogan of " National " unity in order to swiftly carry through economy measures at the expense of the working class and in the sharpening struggle for markets mobilise the capitalist state for war.

British imperialism is fighting for its life. The passing of London as the centre of world credit and finance with the devaluation of the £

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has struck a deadly blow at British prestige. The task of the National Government is to intensify the offensive against the working class by the direct reductions in social insurance and wages and by an indirect reduction of wages by tariffs and greater exploitation of the home market. The drastic measures which were carried through by Orders in Council prior to the General Election and the Orders in Council regarding abnormal imports are only the first stages in the economy drive and the prelude of yet greater economy measures at the expense of the working class.

The efforts to save the £ prior to the General Election, the £50,000,000 and £80,000,000 credits from France and U.S.A. proved inadequate to stop the devaluation of the £. The balancing of the Budget by economies of £70,000,000 is now recognised to be unable to stop the decline. The trade boom which was envisaged with the passing of the gold standard has failed to materialise and it is now clear that even the bourgeoisie are beginning to doubt whether the situation is going to be saved by tariffs. The reaction of France to British tariffs reveals the repercussion of even a limited tariff. More and more the British bourgeoisie are driven to an intensification of the economy drive against the workers.

The general election settled nothing for British imperialism. While it is in a measure true that the general election did retard the growing mass movement of resistance by seeking to direct it into parliamentary channels the mass movement is again moving forward to an extra-parliamentary mass offensive. This mass movement will gather impetus from the drive against the employed workers of which the textile workers and dockers are facing wage attacks. The increasing police brutality in smashing up meetings at Labour Exchanges, the fierce persecution of the *Daily Worker*, the Invergordon cases, is not damping down the workers' resistance, but only increasing it and driving the working class forward on the road of revolutionary struggle.

A new stage of working class struggle has opened in Britain, the great class fights of the post-war period (miners' strike, 1921 ; Red Friday and the General Strike) were only the preludes to the great mass struggle which is opening out in Britain. This has revealed itself prior to the election, and since the election, in great mass demonstrations, the Invergordon events, the mass demonstrations of teachers, postmen and civil servants, the increased vote for the Communist candidates, and what is most important, the defeat of the Labour Party in a period of rising working class struggle. It would be foolish to imagine that the Labour Party has been destroyed and that its power and hold over the working class has passed away, but the salient fact which emerges from the general election is that the working class movement has gone beyond the narrow confines of parliamentary democracy and all the efforts of the Labour

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Party and the I.L.P. cannot stop this inevitable trend of the British working class to revolutionary class struggle.

It would, however, be incorrect to assume that despite the bankruptcy of the theories of social democracy that the Labour Party and the I.L.P. have completely lost control of the masses of workers. While it is true that having united with the capitalists in saving capitalism it is subject to the same process of decay and disintegration with the deepening of the crisis its control of the trade union apparatus is still strong and enables it to deceive decisive sections of the working class with its shameless demagogy. The struggle of the workers against their class enemies, the capitalist class, is hampered and retarded by reformism which is the chief obstacle preventing the workers from coming into conflict with their class enemies. It, therefore, follows that the struggle against the Labour Party and I.L.P. must be directed to exposing their unity with the National Government in the maintenance of the existing system of capitalism as expressed in their programme of control of the banks, state capitalism and public utility corporations, revenue tariffs and import boards and breaking their influence over masses of workers who are now going forward in struggle.

The first shock of the general election has now been assimilated by the Labour Party leadership and an increasing realisation of the danger of isolation from the growing mass movement of the workers. There has now been prepared for this month a series of conferences to cover all the important industrial centres. Their purpose is clear. By left demagogy they will attempt to draw the workers back from the path of revolutionary struggle and seek to delude the workers into waiting for a third Labour Government as if their experience of the past two were not enough. The cynical Graham, who has been rewarded with a post in the City, banked upon the short memories of the workers during the election, received a surprise, so also will the Labour leaders during this campaign. The workers are learning in the course of the struggle the real rôle of the Labour and I.L.P. leadership, slowly but surely they are realising that this sham opposition assists the capitalists to carry through the offensive against the working class.

The mass movement, which is again going forward, is still mainly confined to the millions of unemployed and has not yet deeply penetrated into the ranks of the workers employed in industry. The immediate task facing all militant workers is to break down the barriers which prevent the unity of the unemployed and employed. The pending attacks on wages and conditions of dockers, textile and other workers, means an immediate transference of the centre of gravity to the industries where disputes are pending linking these with the increasing struggle against the local authorities and the National Government. The

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economic strike against wage reductions combined with the struggle of the unemployed against the economy cuts of to-day, is the basis for the mass political strike of to-morrow. At the same time, as the workers are mobilised around the "not a penny off" slogans, which unite all sections of the working class, it is necessary to bring out clearly in the most simple manner the socialist solution of the crisis. And in this connection the success in building socialism in the U.S.S.R. must increasingly be brought before the British working class, stressing on every occasion that it is the working class and peasantry of Soviet Russia who are building socialism so that an increasing faith and reliance upon the mass action of the workers themselves can be developed. Every worker is against cuts, either in the dole or wages or social services, and agrees with the necessity of struggle against the capitalist class and immediate mass action on the widest possible scale, but as yet does not fully realise the necessity of building up independent leadership to carry forward the struggle. Mass action of employed and unemployed and the building of independent leadership are the central problems facing the British workers to-day.

The crisis, despite all the efforts of the capitalists and their henchmen, the social democrats, continues to deepen and the working class instead of reeling under the blows of their enemies are fighting back. Slowly but surely the trend of the workers is away from parliamentary shams to the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

The policy pursued by the National Government does not only find expression in Britain. Economy cuts and tariffs are only one side of the medal. The failure of the Round-Table Conference and the revolutionary revival in India, bringing in its train increased police and military measures against the colonial workers and peasants. The problem of debts and reparations and the utilisation of the British crisis by U.S.A. and France to the disadvantage of Britain in the Dominions and Latin America and Europe, the failure of the London Conference in July initiated by Britain, the demands of France for priority of reparations against commercial debts, the reception of the gesture of Mellon by the U.S.A. Senate all show the intensification of the imperialist rivalries between the great powers. It is however significant that just at the moment when imperialist rivalries sharpen that a measure of imperialist unity manifests itself in the Japanese war of intervention in China. The common unity of the League of Nations and the U.S.A., despite mild protests against Japan, is clear evidence of the development of the united forces of world imperialism, in this period of intensifying world crisis, towards war against the only country whose system is clearly showing the way out of the crisis to the workers—the U.S.S.R. Therefore the perspectives of the situation are not only the intensification of the

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economy drive of the National Government in Britain, but also the increasing oppression of the colonial peoples and the drive against the U.S.S.R., leading to war as the capitalist way out of the crisis. This is the rôle of the National Government—a government of Hunger and War.

The line of action for the workers struggle is clearly the concentration of all militant workers in a united defence of social services (unemployment benefit, &c.) and wages. This is the first stage which leads to mass struggle. Out of struggle the new organisational forms develop independent of the reformist machinery (Councils of Action, Factory Committees, &c.). Out of the struggle the reformists and left phrasemongers are isolated from the working class and their retarding influence destroyed. Out of struggle against the economy measures of the National Government the way is opened for a broad united mass movement of the workers under independent leadership which, by its struggle against British imperialism, gives the greatest assistance to the national revolutionary struggle of the colonies and is the best safeguard against the imperialist war preparations against the U.S.S.R. The Communist Party alone, because it is the only party of the working class, grasped this policy and line of action with its simple slogans of "Not a penny off," and the surge of workers to its ranks during the past months is the workers' confirmation of the correctness of the line of the Party. What is necessary now is to make the same intensified drive amongst the employed workers in the factories and the trade unions leading their economic struggles and win them for mass struggle with the unemployed. The winning of the majority of the working class for revolutionary mass action will then be assured and under a revolutionary leadership the working class struggle will broaden and deepen from mass demonstrations and mass strikes to the fight for the overthrow of capitalism and the proletarian dictatorship. Then, and then only, will the British working class overcome the crisis and follow the first workers' republic in building socialism.

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THE COTTON WORKERS' FIGHT

By TED AINLEY

THE struggle of the Lancashire cotton workers has reached a stage of greater sharpness than at any previous time. The employers are endeavouring to realise the whole of their programme of slashing attacks on wages and conditions and are making use of tactics that are calculated to wear down the resistance of the operatives.

Ever since the wage-cut imposed by the Labour Government's Arbitrators in 1929, the militancy of the cotton workers has grown steadily keener. Every attempt to impose worsened conditions has been met with fierce resistance.

Nevertheless the employers can now record certain successes. In some mills the more-looms system is being operated, while in others longer hours are being worked. As a result of the tactics of the employers and the definite collaboration between them and the union officials, these, from being isolated instances, are becoming a very definite tendency in the industry. This marks a break in the workers' front and a starting point for the employers' campaign of the wholesale imposition of their attacks.

The weavers' victory of a year ago was gained in spite of the treachery of the Union officials and revealed the depth of the workers' militancy and their determination to reject all reductions in their standards, whether in the form of more looms, increased hours or lower wages.

The plight of the Lancashire textile industry, so far from improving, actually grows worse with every month that passes. Exports of cotton piece goods and of cotton yarns decline continuously.

EXPORTS OF COTTON PIECE GOODS.

	Linear Yards.
1913	7,075,252,000
1928	3,968,198,300
1929	3,764,852,400
1930	2,490,549,400

In 1931, from January to October, there has been a further heavy decline in exports. The extent of unemployment in the industry is round about 40 per cent. of the insured workers.

The foreign competition from which Lancashire suffers does not diminish. With the intensification of the crisis of world capitalism it increases at an alarming rate and Lancashire is forced, continuously, to retreat.

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Now, with the decision of Japan to go off the Gold Standard, a further crushing blow at Lancashire's trade is dealt and Japan becomes a still more formidable competitor in the ever-shrinking markets of the world.

The alarm of the employers grows with each retrograde step the industry takes. The cotton manufacturers have been forced to realise that the decline of Lancashire's market is a permanent one and that even the advantageous position she held in regard to the production of the finer counts is slipping from her grasp and must, inevitably, be relinquished.

Many enquiries have been held into the reasons for the decline and the remedies. Starting with the Graham Commission set up by the Labour Government, these enquiries have all brought forward schemes for the reorganisation of the industry, the starting point of which is the imposing of worsened conditions—more looms, longer hours—on the workers.

But the achievement of this reorganisation is rendered well-nigh impossible by the existence of a large nunber of conflicting interests within the industry on the one hand, and the existence of a formidable working class, which resists bitterly every attack, sectional or national, which this reorganisation necessitates.

The industry must be trustified. Large amounts of obsolete and semi-obsolete machinery and plant must be scrapped, new machinery—automatic looms, ring spinning, &c.—must be introduced. But to do this, the problem of the conflicting interests must be solved and the workers must be forced to make the " sacrifices " that will give the cotton kings the wherewithal to bring their industry up-to-date and, incidentally, discard a large proportion of those who make the " sacrifices."

These " sacrifices " have been the basis of the struggle in Lancashire these past few years. About this we shall speak later.

One of the attempts to effect the trustification of the industry has been the formation of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation. This body was founded some time ago with the aid of the banks, to buy up 10,000,000 spindles and 25,000 looms. It has become an important factor both as a menace to the smaller firms and as a weapon against the workers.

The main drive of the employers during the past period has been the attempt to foist on the workers the system of more-looms-to-a-weaver, together with the reduction of the piece price list, so that each loom is run more cheaply for the employers.

Apart from the intensification of labour that this means, it must be understood that, by the reduction of the piece price list an absolute reduction in wages is achieved.

Assuming that, due to bad trade, an employer whose mill operated the eight-loom system, laid half his looms idle and the weavers worked

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only four looms, their wages would be just half of what they are to-day for minding the same four looms. When it is borne in mind also that on certain cloths it is absolutely impossible to operate more looms than are at present operated, and that the more-looms system is applied here also, it becomes very clear that the demand for more-looms-per-weaver is primarily a smashing attack on wages.

The attitude of the trade union officials to this question, as well as to the question of wages and hours generally, has been that of striving by every artifice to impose these conditions on the workers. Despite repeated declarations (made with full knowledge of the militancy of the cotton operatives) of their opposition to the more-looms system, they have striven to break down the resistance of the workers.

At Spencer's Mill, Burnley, they signed an agreement with the mill-owner for the working of more looms. This agreement they were afterwards forced by the rank-and-file to repudiate. At Amos Nelson's, of Nelson, they also signed an agreement for the working of more looms.

Finally, during the recent negotiations, they dropped entirely any opposition to the more-looms issue, contenting themselves with insistence on a 50s. guaranteed wage.

Nevertheless, throughout the whole period of the employers' drive, the stubbornness of the workers' resistance has not slackened in the slightest degree. On the contrary it has stiffened continuously as a result of the intensification of the struggle and the victories gained.

The victory of the weavers at the beginning of the year was a tribute to the splendid fighting spirit of the rank-and-file and their strength in opposition to all the forces of the millowners, amongst whom must be counted the trade union officials.

The victory at Spencer's, when this employer was forced to close his mill because of the blank refusal of the workers to accept more looms, and the whole series of victories at mills throughout Lancashire that have been won over the past three years, bear testimony to the sustained character of the workers' opposition. All of these victories have been won by the workers against the combined forces of the Employers and their Press, their police and the Union officials.

It can be said that, despite the fact that some few mills are working either more looms, or altered conditions and piece prices, in the main the workers' resistance has been successful in holding back the attack of the bosses.

The present drive of the cotton employers differs from all previous attacks both in degree of intensity and in the extent of the attack. Not only is every section of the industry attacked, but the attack covers every phase of working conditions.

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The employers in the Manufacturing section are demanding:

(1) Introduction of more looms to a weaver.
(2) Reduction of the piece price list.

In the Spinning section the employers are demanding:

(1) An increase of hours from 48 to 55½ per week.
(2) Reductions in wages by 25 per cent.
(3) Abolition of cleaning time allowance.

It must also be particularly noted that the method of conducting the struggle for the imposition of these demands differs from any previous stage, both because of the experience of the employers as to the militancy of the workers and the comparative inefficiency of the Union officials to stem that militancy and because of the creation of new weapons in the hands of the bosses with which to drive home their attack.

The Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' Associations has given one month's notice to terminate the 1919 agreement. It called a Conference to discuss the question of longer hours and lower wages to which the officials of the United Textile Factory Workers' Association accepted an invitation to attend. The conference was conducted in a very cut-and-dried manner and no agreement was reached as to the terms of an agreement to replace the 1919.

It is noteworthy that Mr. Mills, who presided at the conference, gave expression to the growing apprehension of the employers as to the results of Japan's removal from the Gold Standard or Lancashire's trade.

The Spinning employers are proceeding with their attack in the mills; striving to impose their terms on each mill in turn.

The Manufacturers, who had been negotiating on more looms, &c., with the weavers' officials, decided not to give notices and did not continue the negotiations. This, however, does not signify the dropping of the employers' demands, but is simply an indication of their intention to utilise others means of getting their terms accepted.

It is, primarily, caused by their realisation that the negotiations with the Union officials, notwithstanding their certainty of ultimate success in securing agreement in all points of their programme would have no weight with the cotton operatives, who would still be as determined as ever to give battle on all points. This had been made very clear to them in the struggles of the past year or so, when it became obvious that the Textile Union officials were more discredited than any other set of officials in Britain.

The officials of the Unions, however, have decided to re-open these negotiations and have asked for a joint meeting with the employers which will have been held before this article is in print.

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The method that both Spinning and Manufacturing employers are utilising to drive their attack forward is that of striving to impose their terms on individual mills, on a wide scale and persistently.

In this they have undoubtedly many heavy weapons at their disposal. First they have both the Anomalies Act of the Labour Government and the Means Test which is being operated by the Councils in Lancashire, in which are included many Labour Councils.

By means of the Labour Government's Anomalies Act, thousands of women have been struck off benefit in Lancashire. These women are placed in a terrible plight economically, and it is intended that they shall thus be driven by the lack of hunger and the needs of their children to enter the mill on the employer's slave terms.

The Means Test is a most potent weapon in this drive of the employers. By it all those on transitional benefit can be struck off, or so reduced, that the alternative of acceptance of the employers' conditions or starvation is presented to them.

Significant of the direct collaboration on this question is the fact that in Burnley, when Mr. Tertius Spencer opened his Queens Mill on six looms to a weaver, the issue of forms to those on transitional benefit for the operation of the Means Test was held back for a week so that it would coincide with the opening of the mill.

Both these weapons, then, are factors for the greatest consideration in the struggle of the Lancashire cotton operatives for the defence of their working conditions as well as for the maintenance of the unemployed workers. A further weapon that is now being forged for use against the cotton workers is the new scheme for the unification of the industry.

This scheme which is brought forward by the Joint Committee of the Cotton Trade Organisations, on which both employers and union officials are represented, proposes to place in the hands of Statutory Trustees the power to raise loans (secured by levies on the industry) for the purpose of acquiring mills and plant in order that these can be scrapped or "immobilised" as the cotton kings euphoniously call it.

In this way it seeks to "immobilise" 10,000,000 spindles (nearly one-fifth of Lancashire's total) and 100,000 looms (nearly one-sixth of the total) The money for the repayment of loans raised for this purpose will be levied at the rate of 2d. to 3d. per spindle and 5s. to 7s. 6d. per loom per year. It has been estimated that this scheme will involve the closing of 300 mills.

This scheme has been described as "substituting anæsthetic surgery for industrial gangrene." It is, however, a damning indictment of the capitalist system of production that such a method has to be resorted to by the scions of "progress" of the twentieth century.

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It may be remarked, in passing, that the early days of the textile industry were marked by the advent of the Luddites, those militant workers who, finding themselves cast adrift and doomed to starvation as a result of the introduction of the power loom, organised the smashing of the machinery under the illusion that it, and not the capitalist system of production, was their enemy.

How the employers then and since have abused these workers who in their desire to struggle against their misery, tried to stop the " onward march of progress " ! Can it be that, as the Luddites, with their primitive ideas of working class struggle, marked the beginnings of British capitalism, so the modern capitalist machine-wreckers, with their wholesale scrapping of machinery, mark the final desperation and decay of capitalism ?

But we are here concerned, primarily, with the immediate objects the bosses hope to secure by this monstrous idea. Its main purpose, quite clearly, is to unify the industry against the workers, to eliminate much of the competition which acts as an obstacle to the attack on the workers and to provide a sword with which to strike at the workers in the most effective manner. By the achievement of these objects the scheme is intended to pave the way for the introduction on a large scale of new machines—automatic looms, ring spinning, &c.—in an endeavour to win back some, at least, of the once boundless market of the Lancashire cotton industry.

The scheme enables the cotton employers to present to the operatives at every mill in turn the pistol threat of the closure of the mill permanently if their terms are not accepted. Armed with the funds that their committee will have at its disposal and their arbitrary power over the individual mills, the capitalists will be able to do this in every mill they attack. The *Cotton Factory Times* (semi-official organ of the Unions) makes this clear by its suggestion to the employers that they should postpone the imposition of their demands for longer hours until after the scheme is operative.

This is also made abundantly plain by an editorial in the *Manchester Guardian* on the day the scheme was announced (December 11, 1931):

> It is worth bearing in mind that the scheme is, at least, essentially a negative one. It in no way absolves the industry from the necessity of applying itself to *more positive reforms, although it may make their achievement easier.* (My italics.—T.A.)

It is the effort to achieve these " more positive reforms," that is to say, the reduction of costs of production by attacks on the workers' standards, which is the cause of the continuous struggle between employers and workers. In addition, it gives the cotton kings the hold over their

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smaller rivals (who have proved a source of considerable annoyance by their desperate struggle to remain in existence) that they have so long desired.

Whether this scheme is counter to the idea of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation has been raised. But, having in mind all the circumstances that are, at the moment, available, it seems fairly clear that it is complementary to it and is a means of speeding up the development of the trustification of the industry parallel to the Cotton Corporation.

We are concerned, then, with a drive of the employers against the cotton workers of the most far-reaching kind, in which the employers are armed with a number of very effective weapons.

What are the weapons of the workers ?

In all the big struggles that the cotton workers have fought, a prominent part has been played by the Textile Minority Movement. The Minority Movement has been responsible for leading the cotton workers in many victories. The victory of the weavers in the lock-out at the beginning of last year, the victory at Spencer's and many others could be cited.

The Piecers' Reform Movement has come into existence, giving the possibility of leadership to a very important section of the industry who are seething with revolt against the intensity with which they are exploited.

The National Unemployed Workers Movement has succeeded in mobilising large demonstrations of the unemployed to the factories where the more-looms system has been operated or attempted, as well as to the Public Assistance Committees against the Means Test.

Can it be said then that the cotton workers have built up their alternative leadership in struggles for the defence of their standards ? An examination of the position in Lancashire will reveal that this is not the case.

The Textile Minority Movement has, undoubtedly, won the leadership of the textile workers on many occasions. But these have been occasions when the possibility of leadership, on the basis of the mass enthusiasm for struggle of the workers, existed for the moment, without the necessity for much painstaking preparation, including the building up of organisation for struggle in the mills.

The difficult day-to-day work of building up organisation in the mills, of organising broad committees of the unemployed, of basing the Piecers' Reform Movement firmly on the mills and of uniting the workers, organised and unorganised, employed and unemployed, young and adult workers, has either not been attempted or has been approached in

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a sectarian and defeatist spirit. Consequently there does not exist a revolutionary leadership which is so rooted in the mills and linked up with all sections of the working class as to have the authority to call strikes, to which the workers will respond in the knowledge that theirs is the road to victory.

Certainly splendid work has been done by the Textile Minority Movement in certain mills and much detailed preparation for struggle has been carried through. These have achieved definite and concrete results (*e.g.*, Burnley). But it remains true that in many instances strikes have broken out in places where not even the most elementary form of Minority Movement organisation exists and, in still more cases, where the Minority Movement has only appeared after the workers have, on their own initiative, stopped the mill.

The Textile Minority Movement generally has not succeeded in linking up the struggle of the cotton workers against more looms and longer hours with the struggle against the Means Test.

Similarly, the work within the unions which, on occasions, has been of a more effective character than has been experienced in any other industry, has suffered from an inability to go beyond a certain very definite stage in the fight against the officials. In this way there has been a tendency to play into the hands of the " left " elements of social reformism who are quick to seize advantage from the mistakes of the revolutionaries.

No finer demonstration of mass work in connection with the work within the unions has been shown anywhere than that which took place in Burnley recently. Here the comrades carried the work to a very high stage, securing a requisitioned meeting of the Weavers' Union, at which the officials were faced with the stone-wall opposition to their policy by the rank-and-file. So much was this so, that these officials walked off the platform rather than put the motions of the militants, which were certain of support from the overwhelming majority of weavers present. But it was just at this stage, when the opportunity for carrying the victory a further stage and thus ensuring the complete rout of the officials presented itself, that our comrades proved unable to cope with the situation and left the matter to the wiles of the lefts. These led the weavers away from the hall for a " demonstration," when it must have been pretty clear that here was an opportunity of taking the platform the officials had vacated and completing their discomfiture.

The task of building organisation for struggle in the mills, must be regarded as the central feature of the day-to-day work of the Minority Movement. This has to be regarded not as a general statement of Minority Movement policy, but as the most urgent demand dictated by the situation in which the attack of bosses is plied ceaselessly in mill after mill.

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The establishment of broad unemployed committees that will mobilise masses of unemployed workers for struggle alongside the millworkers is also rendered necessary by the character of the struggle and it must be pretty plain that any talk of establishing Councils of Action which excludes these fundamental tasks, on the basis of which the slogans of the Minority Movement can be operated, is so much talk, without reality behind it.

The lessons to be learned from experiences in the fight within the unions must be studied by all comrades active in the struggle. It will then be possible to guard against the mistakes of the past work and to conduct it in future in such a manner as to produce the really great results that the situation offers.

The situation is one in which the most favourable circumstances exist for the winning of the leadership of the masses of cotton workers by the revolutionary elements.

The bosses are attacking relentlessly. The workers engaged in struggle daily are seeking a leadership that will prove a genuine alternative to the officials who have so repeatedly handed them over to the mill-owners, and one which will direct them to victory. The trade union leaders are thoroughly discredited. Nevertheless, they are able, by their conspiracy with the employers, to hold in check the independent action of the workers, unless the fighting organisation of the workers is built up in the mills.

The task presented to the Communists and their allies, which brooks of no delay, is that they should equip themselves to be able to provide that leadership and to prove to the workers, by their actions in the day-to-day struggle, that only under revolutionary leadership can the struggle of the cotton workers be carried to success and the way opened up for the solution of all problems through the overthrow of capitalism.

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LEFT SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

The I.L.P. is Social-Democracy

By N. C. SODERLAND

[*The discussions of the issues raised by R.P.D. in the Notes of the Month on "Left Socialism and Communism" in last year's April number of the* LABOUR MONTHLY *is here continued. Previous contributions have occurred in the issues for May, July, September, November and December, as well as certain aspects further dealt with by R.P.D. in his Notes in the issues for July, September, October and November. Readers are invited to give expression to their views on this subject.*]

THE I.L.P. has always been a party of many controversies, of much dissension, but never has there been discussion so deep, so fundamental as to-day. The I.L.P. has for a year or so suffered a gradual loss of membership, has lost most of the influence it held in the Labour Party; why, therefore, should the keenest discussion occur now? Numbers of articles have been written upon one aspect or other of the problem. An answer to the question may be found by a more general survey and a wider view of the whole subject of the I.L.P. and the Labour Party and disaffiliation, &c.

Firstly, one must be clear as to the actual position, historically, of the I.L.P. Previous to the war the Socialist world was dominated by Social-Democracy, and by that term I mean definitely the philosophy of an expanding capitalism changing by a process of reforms, and by the education of its administrative side, through a reconstruction of itself to a socialist state. At that time there was no effective organised opposition to this view. The I.L.P. was the ordinary British section of that view; the I.L.P. therefore an ordinary part of the original, or one might say "real," social-democracy. The Labour Party was not quite that, it was much nearer the Liberal position and more an industrial organisation, it was indeed but an organisation of affiliations. The I.L.P. was the real home of Social-Democracy in Britain.

After the war the whole of Social-Democracy underwent an enormous change. With the critical position of capitalism in 1918-23, Social-Democracy became the instrument of capitalism, particularly so on the continent. But a curious position arose in this country, the Labour Party had altered its form so that it became larger and more pliant and

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took the position of being the embodiment of Social-Democracy in this country, whilst the I.L.P. was relegated to being but a section of the Democracy. The importance was this. Whilst the Labour Party moved with the rest of Social-Democracy openly to defend and to stabilise Capitalism the I.L.P. did not. It still desired by a process of rapid changes to pass into socialism; it therefore became the left-wing of the Labour Party. It still desired and hoped for working class and socialist support, whereas the Labour Party came more and more to desire Liberal support.

The shifting of the economic basis of Social Democracy is very clear at the last Congress of the Second International at Vienna; the whole Congress was devoted to considerations of capitalism's problems in a capitalist way.

So that this is roughly the position. The I.L.P. leaders still maintaining their idea of peaceful progression, are confronted with capitalist decay and also with Social-Democracy becoming the front line of Capitalism, so they feel that the old philosophy no longer quite fits the case, but still want to apply its main principles.

Hence, surely, the desire for a speedier gradualism, for "Socialism in our Time" proposals, &c. Later confronted by the actual collapse of capitalist economy, these proposals, these plans of rapid gradualist revolution, which are to place the workers in the ruling position show that whilst the class struggle is accepted, the methods of class struggle are not, the outlook of the I.L.P. leaders remains definitely Parliamentary and away from the organisation of actual struggle.

In writing about Kautsky, Lenin remarked in *Socialism and the War*, 1915:

> Kautsky . . . offers an extremely typical and telling example of how a merely verbal adhesion to Marxism has brought about, in practice, its transformation into . . . a Liberal bourgeois doctrine, sanctioning a non-revolutionary class-struggle of the proletariat. . . . By means of obvious sophisms the living revolutionary soul is ripped out of Marxism, in which everything is accepted except the revolutionary methods of struggle, their propaganda and preparation and the education of the masses for that purpose.

This indeed was said of Kautsky but it might in a sense be applied to Brockway and Maxton, with this difference: Kautsky started as a Marxist and finished as a Liberal capitalist-apologist. Brockway started as an ardent Pacifist and Reformer, was forcibly dragged by the press-gang of economic events into the drill-yard of Marxism, where, feeling extremely strange and uncomfortable, he eyes mournfully his former tranquility, to which he longs to return.

This becomes clearer; the uncertainty of the inevitable collapse of capitalism; the awakening shock of that collapse becoming certain;

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the repugnance for the organisation of methods of class struggle; and under it all a retention of Social-Democratic ideas. That is briefly the position of the I.L.P. leaders to-day.

Let us for a while see how this applies. Maxton in the *New Leader* of August 15, 1930, in an article upon how to achieve Socialism in twenty-five years, says

> On one side of us we have Tory, Liberal and official Labour regarding the phenomenon of unemployment as being due to temporary causes and on our other side the Communists, who agreed that it was in the essence of Capitalism, but hold that complete collapse was imminent, and that that collapse would produce the opportunity for working class power and drastic cure.
>
> So far as the last decade is concerned, both these readings of the situation have proved disastrously untrue, and it is surely reasonable that the I.L.P. should ask the people of this country, and particularly the Labour Movement, to consider now our theory of the situation and and our plans for meeting it.

Thus Maxton speaks for the I.L.P. leadership. No collapse of Capitalism is considered possible, apparently because it hasn't already happened in the past decade! The idea of class struggle, of revolutionary action is laid aside on behalf of the I.L.P. by Maxton, whose analysis of the situation could not envisage something which was plain for all to see, *i.e.*, the widening and deepening of the economic crisis which led direct to the present situation. He rejects the openly reactionary position of the Labour Party who had already passed over to the ranks of capitalist defence, but on the other hand the Communists also are to be repudiated with all preparation for revolutionary action, because however deep the crisis of capitalism it would still be possible to persuade capitalism to be changed by rapid Parliamentary action to Socialism.

This is the extraordinary but real position of the I.L.P. leadership which a year ago they quite openly put forward. To move a little further—to the Annual Conference of 1931. Maxton addressed the Conference.

> I do believe that it is possible that in 1941 progress towards international Socialism will have so far advanced that the leisure necessary, the financial resources necessary . . . possible for a Conference of workers to meet in whatever corner of the world appears to them most congenial . . . I have deliberately made this jump into the future for two reasons, first, to put our troubles and difficulties, worries and struggles, Party rivalries . . . into their proper perspective. . . . Indeed, if human nature remains in its essence what it has been, the attainment of such social standards as I have visualised becomes inevitable.

This I think is sufficient to show us that here is no Marxian analysis, but the pipe-dreaming of a sentimental reformist. Even at Easter of last year, the workers are not informed and warned of the impending sharpening of the crisis, but instead are treated to something from the " pure " Social-Democracy of long ago.

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Economic events however altered matters, and in September when the crisis had become familiar to all, Maxton suddenly discovers that the Communists were not so far wrong after all.

> There is no end but complete catastrophe. The drive towards catastrophe gains greater momentum at each step. The downward speed becomes greater. . . . That a new revolutionary outlook will have to be secured, and a new revolutionary tactic adopted is obvious. (Maxton in *New Leader*, September 4.)

Maxton suddenly decides that he must find a new outlook of a revolutionary character. What can that outlook be if it is not the outlook that the Communists have held for years, and as far as the rank-and-file go, one might ask, " Why search anew for something which lies ready to hand ? "

On August 28, in the *New Leader*, J. Paton says :

> . . . Now in any realist view of the position of this country can the conclusion be evaded that British Capitalism is heading for disaster ?
>
> We confess we see no prospect of escape. The policies of the new Government can only hasten the process . . . . We are driven to contemplate the possibility that the rapid extension of the breakdown in Capitalism may render impossible any plan of ordered reconstruction and may force us to a reconsideration of our task in a new setting of capitalist collapse.

and Brockway :

> The I.L.P. believes that we are witnessing the failure of Capitalism as an economic system, that the strongest coalition or " National " Government will be futile to stop the industrial decline. . . .
>
> (*New Leader*, July 24.)

These few quotations from among a number which could have been used, show us that the situation comes as a disturbing factor, as something new, to be met with new policies, with new outlooks, proving the essentially Social-Democratic basis of the I.L.P. After so much shouting what is it that is new that the I.L.P. leaders are readjusting themselves to. A Marxian analysis, the repudiation of reformism, the organisation of the whole working class upon a basis of revolutionary struggle ? Well, hardly.

If we turn to the *New Leader* of September 18 we find an article by Brockway : " What should the I.L.P. do ? " In it we learn " The issue is between Capitalism and Socialism ; Gradualism is dead." So ! and what are we to do to bury it ? Go a little further down the page and Brockway will show you : " I.L.P. branches must bend all efforts towards securing a Labour majority. But they must aim not only at a majority. They must aim at a majority to carry through fundamental Socialist changes." This, forsooth, is something new, a new outlook, the abandonment of gradualism ! ! But let us have the rest of the article. He goes on to advise the setting up of unemployed organisations against

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the National Unemployed Workers' Movement—the Bristol Unemployed Association, &c., and finishes with " One warning word in conclusion. Don't concentrate upon attacking individuals—either the leaders who have left us or the leaders who remain."

On November 6, in the *New Leader*, Brockway again: " But the Standing Orders are only a symptom. The real issue is one of policy. Is the Labour Party now going all out for Socialism? . . . With the Communists our immediate difficulty (apart from method and spirit) is this: "

Now what do we get out of all this?

That the I.L.P. leaders were always basically Social-Democratic. That they suddenly see the bottom drop out of the old Social-Democracy. The re-alignment of Social-Democracy as the front line of Capitalism. And against this they react, first in horror of Social-Democracy's championing of Capitalism towards some new solutions—the alternative to Social-Democracy being revolutionary Socialism; their Social-Democratic nature cannot assimilate this and they again react in horror, back towards the Social-Democracy of to-day. This explains the position in which a new outlook and policy is desired which turns out to be merely support of the Labour Party. There is desired a new method, a new tactic to meet the situation, which to be new must needs be something different from Social-Democracy, or in other words, the method and tactics of revolutionary socialism—the Communist way. But Brockway still says that he (the I.L.P. leaders) still differ from the Communists in " method and spirit." Since the only alternatives are Social-Democracy (defence of Capitalism) and revolutionary Socialism (Communism) one is forced to see that there is really no change in the I.L.P. leaders, nothing new at all, but only Social-Democratic Parliamentarianism with an occasional revlutionary shout.

Brockway wonders whether the Labour Party will go all out for Socialism in a time of Capitalist crisis. Whilst telling people to support the Labour Party he wants a Labour Party which will, in the face of capitalist crisis, carry out socialist measures. Is it likely? Can it be so? Perhaps Brockway will answer. In the *New Leader* of July 10, he says: " But more serious even than this difference in policy is the view of the Government (Labour Party) that social advance must be postponed until there is a recovery of Capitalism."

What does this show except that after answering a question, he asks it, just meaning that neither he nor the other leaders of the I.L.P. know where they are, what they want, or what to do. In fact " in which everything is accepted except the revolutionary methods of struggle . . ." as Lenin said.

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The I.L.P. leaders still retain the pre-war Social-Democratic ideology with which they try to meet the events of to-day. With the ideas of 1910, the methods of 1900, they try to meet the problems of 1931. And in common with all anachronisms they are breaking up and fading out. In *Parliament and Revolution* ten years ago, MacDonald said, "The Independent Labour Party . . . believes in the class conflict as a descriptive fact, but . . . does not regard it as supplying a political method." The new outlook is not, after all, so very new.

So much for the leaders. Why the difference of the rank and file? Why do they seek a new outlook?

In the same way and for the same reasons that the rest of the working class is doing so. Because hope in Social-Democracy is fast dying out, because the workers are driven by the attacks of Capitalism, seeking a solution, into the position of revolt.

Whether disaffiliation comes at Easter or not, will not be so terribly important. The problem is for the I.L.P. rank and file, collectively and individually, to consider the question in the light of a bankrupt Social-Democracy, now the forefront of Capitalism, and the newly awakening call of the revolutionary way out. Remembering that the I.L.P. is, and must remain, a part of Social-Democracy, let them consider disaffiliation as being, not only from the Labour Party, but also from Social-Democracy as a whole. If the rank and file faces this squarely, abandons the whole philosophy of gradualism and all it implies and adopts the philosophy of revolutionary socialism, where its leaders will certainly not follow it, the rank and file of the I.L.P. will become part of the Communist International. What is there to buck at in that? For is it not the light, the hope, and the salvation of mankind?

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GROWING REVOLT IN JAPAN

By NAKATA

I.

JAPAN is a land where feudalism (monarchy and semi-feudal exploitation in agriculture in which half of the total Japanese population are engaged) and modernism (the most highly-developed monopolist capitalism) rule in intertwinement; where the bourgeoisie and the landlords exploit and oppress the majority of the peoples by means of the semi-feudal monarchist state apparatus. The Japanese ruling classes, like the British, are the typical parasitic imperialism which depend on the robbery of the workers and toiling peasantry not only in their home country but also in colonies and semi-colonies. For Japanese capitalism has grown without the essentials for its development at home except for semi-colonial cheap labour power: a gigantic cotton-spinning industry without producing even a handful of raw cotton; a big heavy industry without iron and sufficient coal; a first class militarism without materials necessary to war (iron, oil, salt, &c.); an enormously expanded industrial productivity and a huge accumulation of capital in the hands of financial magnates without a corresponding home market; an exceptionally dense population without land enough to live in. Exceptional rapacity and greed for raw materials and foreign markets on the part of its capitalists characterise aggressive, warlike Japanese Imperialism throughout the whole history of its 60 years of development.

This profound contradiction in the structure of Japanese capitalism has been sharpened in the extreme owing to the present ever-deepening economic crisis. This is the reason why Japanese imperialism has carried out this headlong military occupation of Manchuria at the present moment.

II.

The Japanese economic crisis interwoven with the agrarian crisis began in 1929 as an integral part of the world economic crisis. In spite of the optimistic prophecies by bourgeois economists, the situation has been turning from bad to worse without any sign of recovery. The bourgeoisie are trying to find the way out of the crisis by shifting all of its burdens on to the back of the workers and peasants on the one hand, and by aggressive imperialist expansion on the other hand.

There are about 5,000,000 industrial workers in Japan. A half of them are factory workers; and a half of those factory workers are composed of textile women workers who are generally under 23 years of age.

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The crisis snatched employment from more than one-third of the total workers, exceeding 2,000,000. Wages of employed workers have been sharply and systematically cut. Before the crisis, the wages of Japanese workers were on a starvation level. The average amount of wages per hour was only 14.1 sen (roughly 14 farthings). That of cotton-spinning girls was 9.8 sen; they worked in two 12-hour shifts with one hour off for meals, earning from 50 sen per day to a maximum of 190 sen, but the majority received less than 80 sen. Wages of men were by no means high; more than one-third received less than 1.60 yen.[1] As a result of the crisis those wages have been cut, bringing them down to between 30 to 40 per cent. lower than before the crisis. This is only the average wage though. In the Nagano Prefecture, for instance, there is a regulation of a minimum wage for silk filature girls of 1.35 yen monthly. However, these workers are lucky, because they still receive some money. In January of last year 111 factories in the same prefecture alone ceased paying any wages, affecting 23,500 workers, the loss of wages amounting to 580,000 yen. Thus, during the year 1930 alone, the capitalists squeezed out of the working class over 600,000,000 yen, merely by the reduction of wages.

According to the bourgeoisie, the cotton industry is the "flower" of Japanese industries, because this industry is realising yearly the highest profit. It must be remembered, however, that this "flower" is fertilised by the blood and sweat of tens of thousands of young working girls. The majority of these working girls are confined in dormitories inside the high walls of the factories under the absolute control of their employers, making the organisation of trade unions almost impossible. "The dormitories were like pig-sties," wrote a British observer, "the same rooms being used by the day and night shifts, and only one mat space being provided for each girl. Consumption was rife, and after three years a girl was always unfit to work any longer. The food was edible but poor: rice and some vegetable for each meal, with fish and tinned meat once a week. For this they were paid 12 sen a day. . . . The girls did not dare return home (because their homes are more miserable), and so they either got work at another (worse) factory or became prostitutes. . . ." (*Lancashire and the Far East*, by Freda Utley.)

There is a song sung by the girls at work, which expresses their feelings:

Our home is dark with poverty:
Though I am only twelve years' old
They sold me to a joint-stock company;
I slave in the factory for a few sens!

This is the real life and picture of the workers in the most highly developed imperialist country of the Orient. This is the "secret" of the rapid growth of capitalism in that country.

[1] 1 yen = 2 shillings; 1 sen = $\frac{1}{100}$ yen.

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III.

Turning to the villages, Asiatic and feudal poverty and misery are overshadowing the whole country life. There is an agricultural population of 27,000,000, which is 48 per cent. of the total population of Japan. 18 per cent. of the total agricultural population are the parasitic landlords who do not labour at all, though these possess 46 per cent. of the best land. Nearly 70 per cent. of the peasantry are the poor peasants who toil on the land belonging to the owners. The majority cultivate between 1½ to 2½ acres. Most operations are still carried on by hand with the same primitive implements and by the same methods as in feudal times. Large-scale methods of production, tractors or combines are unknown to Japanese peasants. They work on a tiny bit of land the whole day, from the early morning till late in the evening, mobilising all members of their families. For what? In order to pay, as tenancy rent, 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. of the harvest to their parasitic landlords in kind (rice) as in the feudal age, otherwise their land is forcibly wrested from them by the judge or the police.

Last year cost of production exceeded the price of rice by 37 per cent. Therefore many families have to depend to a large extent for their living on the earnings from their sons and daughters, which they send home every month from the mills in the towns. But the present crisis is throwing these workers on the streets, and they are being forced to return to their villages. As a result of the present crisis the peasantry lost during one year 1,250,000,000 yen by the fall of prices of agricultural products and 312,000,000 yen by the reduction of wages. The position of the peasantry is becoming radically worse and worse. Villages are overflowing with unemployed workers. They cannot eat the rice they themselves produce. Literally they are starving. The death rate in the country is rapidly increasing. The Japanese peasantry are exploited and oppressed by the semi-feudal methods of parasitic landlords, hand in hand with the bourgeoisie. But they have begun to revolt against their oppressors. Spontaneous riots are becoming widespread in the villages.

IV.

There is a pessimistic song of working girls:

I am a working girl; a poor little bird!
I have wings, but cannot fly;
There is the sky, but I am in a cage;
A bird with broken wings.

However, those girls have begun to sing a revolutionary song, the "Red Flag"; they have begun to break out from their cage. The Japanese working class have begun to fight for freedom from their capitalist chains. The strike wave, which had continued to rise since

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the World War, suddenly leapt up in 1930. A torch was lit by the young girls at the Hyogo Mill of the Kanegafuchi Cotton Co., employing 3,000 workers. This extended to other cotton mills, and then to other industries, such as metal, shipbuilding, chemical, mining and transport. At present the wave is sweeping over the industrial towns. During the first half of this year occurred 1,079 labour disputes, involving 84,044 workers. These figures are the highest on record in Japanese history. They are not only the biggest in number, but also the most stubborn, the most revolutionary in character. The striking workers to an ever greater degree are breaking through the framework of legality, in spite of the reformist leaders' opposition. There is practically no strike waged without bloody collisions with the police, fascist gangs and strike-breakers. In a number of cases the workers have seized the factories (Fushimi Weaving Mill, &c.) and erected barricades there (Sumitomo Steel Works, &c.). Street fights have often been fought between the strikers and the police (Toyo Mousseline Works, &c.). At every strike mass arrests are general; for example, 200 at the Fushimi strike, 3,500 at the Sumitomo, 800 at the Toyo, strike. The organised workers are beginning to free themselves from the influence of the reformist leaders; the revolutionary opposition in the reformist trade unions is rapidly growing. The influence and the numerical strength of the revolutionary trade union centre, "Zenkyo," a section of the Red International of Labour Unions, is steadily increasing.

Turning our eyes to the villages, there also we witness the open bloody revolts of peasant masses against the landlords and their police. Peasant disputes, amounting to 1,523 cases during the first half of last year, indicate the highest on historical record. The starving peasantry demand a reduction of tenancy rent or refuse to pay any rent to the landowners, with the support of their fellow peasants and often under the leadership of peasant unions. Against this the landowners resort to the court and the police in order to snatch the crops or land from the peasants. In the end, both forces come into collision. At Mayedamura (Akita) a few hundred armed peasants fought during three days (November, 1929) against the police and hired gangs. At Okanbara (Niigata) hundreds of peasants, in June, 1930, assaulted the landlord's house, resulting in mass arrests (80 peasants). Nearly 1,000 peasants were arrested in Yamanashi in March last year. These are, however, only a few examples. The struggles of the peasants go far beyond the limit of legality. The demand for the reduction of tenancy rent has ceased to be their central slogan; the slogan, "Land to the Peasants," is becoming their central immediate slogan. The young masses in the reformist Peasant Unions are coming toward the revolutionary wing under the influence of the Communist Party of Japan.

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The urban poor, especially the lower officials, the employees and the students are by no means unaffected by this social unrest and rebellion. They are discharged from their employment in mass (3,000 from the state railways, 1,700 from the South Manchurian Co., &c.). Their salaries are radically cut (*e.g.*, a cut of 5,000,000 yen from the yearly salary of State employees in May last). Against this the officials threatened the government to carry on a general strike. Students are becoming more and more radical; 42 per cent. of the university graduates are faced with the prospect of unemployment. Students' "strikes" are becoming widespread over the country, including the students of elementary schools. Early last year 165 students were dismissed from the universities. "Study circles of Social Science" are illegally organised in every high school, in spite of the repression of the authorities. In August last about 100 teachers of elementary schools were arrested throughout the country, on the charge of belonging to revolutionary teachers' unions. The petit bourgeoisie, who are one of the chief bulwarks of capitalism, have begun to rebel against their masters.

Along with the rapid revolutionisation of the working masses in Japan, the revolt of the oppressed peoples in Korea and Formosa against Japanese imperialism is steadily growing, in spite of the military terror of their oppressor. In Korea strikes and peasant fights are spreading; the Communist Party, the Young Communist League and revolutionary trade unions are winning influence among the masses in the teeth of a series of mass arrests. In Formosa, in October, 1930, the Musha tribe rose up in arms against Japanese oppression; in August last year 500 printers at Taihoku carried on a general strike; a Communist Party and a Young Communist League began to be organised. The colonial and semi-colonial countries, which are the material basis of Japanese imperialism, have begun to revolt against their oppressor.

V.

These economic struggles of the Japanese workers sometimes arise spontaneously and are carried on by the workers themselves or are led by their trade unions. At the end of 1930 there were 712 trade unions, with a membership of 354,312. However, the overwhelming majority of these unions are at present under the influence of the right and left reformist leaders. The right reformist unions support the Shakai-minshu-to (Social Peoples' Party) which openly opposes Communism and adheres to the Second International. The left support the Taishuto (Mass Party) which veils its social fascist character with left phraseology. They are both birds of a feather. Recently they formed a "Labour Club" to fight jointly against the radicalisation of the masses.

Against the above there is an illegal national centre of revolutionary trade unions, "Zenkyo" (National Council of Trade Unions), which

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adheres to the Red International of Labour Unions. The Zenkyo is composed of 11 important industrial unions, with a 15,000 membership. Under its leadership there are revolutionary opposition groups in the reformist unions. The Japanese government now concentrates its fire on the Zenkyo, because it is not only the central leadership of the revolutionary trade union movement in Japan, but also the strongest link between the Communist Party of Japan and the broad masses. At the end of August, 1,500 militant workers were arrested at Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto and other towns, as a direct preparation for a military invasion of Japanese imperialism in Manchuria.

Part of the peasants are organised in various peasant unions (4,225 unions, with 300,105 membership). But the majority of unions are under the influence of the reactionary leaders. The National Peasant Union is the biggest union (50,000) and leads the struggle of the poor peasants. At least half its members are under the leadership of the revolutionary wing.

The Communist Party of Japan is the centre and leader of all these revolutionary movements. The Party was established illegally in 1922. Its subsequent history tells of incessant terrorist repression on it and of its persistent reorganisation. There are at present 2,000 members in jail. They were all arrested under the anti-communist " Peace Preservation Law," which can punish all communists with sentences ranging from two years' imprisonment to the death penalty. In Japan almost all workers' organisations under the influence of the Party are forced to be illegal. For example, the Zenkyo, Mopr, Anti-Imperialist League, Anti-Religious League, as well as the Young Communist League, are illegal or semi-legal.

The Communist Party, basing itself on the thesis of the Communist International, makes its central task at the present stage of the Japanese revolution the carrying through of the bourgeois democratic revolution —the overthrow of the monarchy and the completion of the agrarian revolution—which must be transformed *immediately* into the proletarian revolution. The chief motive force of the revolution is the proletariat and the poor and middle peasantry. The Party is now rousing and organising all the revolutionary democratic forces of Japan under the slogan, " People's Revolution for Rice and Land, for a Workers' and Peasants' Government." In spite of medieval repression and terror of the police-monarchist government on the vanguard of the working class, the Party is spreading and strengthening its influence among the masses. It organised illegal mass demonstrations on Unemployed Day, May Day, Anti-War Day, International Youth Day, &c. It has been leading and organising the revolutionary fights against the occupation of Manchuria by Japanese Imperialism. The *Pravda* said in its article

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(September 26), " The arrest of 31 organisers of the demonstration against imperialist war which took place in a suburb of Tokyo shows the real attitude of the advanced section of the Japanese proletariat to the occupation of Manchuria." The Japanese Party put forward the following slogans in an appeal which was widely distributed among the workers and the peasants: " Down with Japanese Imperialism "; " Defend the Chinese People and the Soviets "; " Defend the Soviet Union "; " Turn this War into the Civil War "; " For Soviet Japan."

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INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM AND COMMUNISM[1]

I.

By ROMAIN ROLLAND

YOU have both written in a friendly spirit. I thank you. You know, as I hope all your brothers in the Soviet Union know, that I am your sincere friend and a defender of the Soviet Union in the West. I have welcomed your young revolution from the moment of its birth in 1917, and from the beginning I have untiringly defended it with my pen against those who have attacked and misrepresented it. Just a few days ago I mercilessly tore the hypocritical mask from the face of the " Pan-Europeans." I believe in the Soviet Union and will continue to support it to my last breath. Therefore there is every reason for peace between us, and we should rejoice in this.

But you have found it necessary to become alarmed and perturbed because I consider myself an individualist, and because I harbour a " love for humanity." My dear friends, accept me as I am. Whether I am mistaken or not, at least I am sincere and honest. And in my honesty lies my strength. Yes, I believe in humanity. And this individualist, this " believer in humanity " is fighting your battle. Instead of saying, " No, this cannot be ! " would it not be wiser to rejoice because the Soviet Union has on its side the most ardent champions of individualism and humanity ?

You say, my dear Selvinsky, that individual freedom does not exist and that an " intellectual " has never been free and never can be free. My whole life is an example of the contrary. I have lived as a free man. Amidst my enemies, as amidst everything I have loved, through all that I have fought for, through all that I have been and stood for, I have always remained free. And for this freedom I have paid a high price, the price of living in the absolute seclusion of my own thoughts, surrounded by an atmosphere of violent hatred. I shall not dwell on the hardships this condition has brought upon me, hardships made particularly unendurable by my sensitiveness. For I have never been tempted to make a profession of heartlessness. I have loved and wanted to be

[1] Two letters in answer to the Soviet Novelists, Feodor Gladkov and Ilya Selvinsky, which were published in the Moscow *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. The translation here given appeared in the New York *Nation* (July 15th, 1931), to which we express acknowledgments.

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loved in return. But I have sacrificed everything—happiness, ambition, and material well-being—in order to remain free. And I have succeeded in remaining free—free and alone during all these years of my life. I have stood alone among the herd of Western intellectuals, whose proud dogmas and egotistical prejudices I have never been able to share, alone in my native country, with its nationalism, against which I have fought; I stood alone in 1914, when I unmasked all that was behind the fratricidal war. And I have stood still more completely alone since the signing of the peace treaty, this false peace of robbers, which I have unceasingly attacked and denounced. And alone, with a very small group of persons who think as I do, I stand in the West for the defence of the Soviet Union. So do not say that one cannot be free. One is free when one has enough courage to sacrifice everything for the freedom of one's soul.

And now we come to love for humanity, which, in your opinion, Feodor Gladkov, it is ridiculous even to mention, in these days of brutal and savage upheaval. In my opinion this is precisely the moment to speak of it. Love for humanity has become a standard around which we should rally, at this time of conflict when there is danger of its being trampled under foot. I am doing what I can to rescue it from destruction by people who are savagely fighting one another. You can trample upon me if you wish. . . . Surely when it comes to proclaiming the hypocrisy of " lovers of humanity " and of " peace," we are at one. And who has struggled more tirelessly and attacked this hypocrisy more severely than I, the author of " Liluli " ? But hypocrites we shall find at all times and everywhere, and in every camp. Those are the jackals that follow the lions in order to eat their leavings, and put an end to them if they should happen to become ill or wounded. Do not confuse them with the lions. And do not confuse noble individualism, that believes it " better to die than to betray your convictions," with low egotism, that thinks of nothing but how to fill its stomach and satisfy its ambitions and interests. Do not confuse the false love for humanity of the Tartuffes who grow fat on the peace treaty and the international bureau of disarmament with the ardent flame of love and sacrifice that burns in the name of freedom, and that seeks to elevate and enlighten the oppressed and exploited masses of humanity—this same flame that lives within you.

For in your country, my friends of the Soviet Union, consciousness and appreciation of life are free. And you yourselves, not realising this, are true individualists, true apostles and ardent servants of humanity. Can you not realise that ? I am bringing to you, into the camp of workers who have become masters of their own destiny, the sacred banner of freedom of spirit and love for humanity. Do not be so blind as to reject it. Be proud of it ! Rejoice that we are fighting in your ranks. Do you remember in Shakespeare's amazing work, " Antony and Cleopatra,"

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the eve of the great battle that was to decide the destiny of the world, and that was to give the power into the hands of Octavius ? Mysterious music is heard on the night air ; the sound of flutes floats over Antony's camp, and singing from an invisible parade is heard, gradually fading away and dying out. That is the march of Dionysus, and it is Antony's gods who are abandoning him. They are abandoning the one who is doomed to die. . . . The gods of the old world, individualism and humanity, are fleeing from the camp of your enemies, and they are coming to your camp. Accept them. And accept the hand of one who leads them. This hand is experienced in the battles of a whole lifetime. And this hand is firm. And it presses your hand.

II.

By A. V. LUNACHARSKY

I must ask your forgiveness, my friends Selvinsky and Gladkov. For in this controversy I am nearer to the point of view of Romain Rolland than to yours. And I consider myself none the less Marxian for that.

One might easily understand from Romain Rolland's letter that you have accused him of being an individualist and a " servant of humanity," but that in reality there exists no such thing as individual freedom, nor any such thing as a love for humanity. One is forced to conclude from Rolland's letter that you think there are only social restrictions, which are borne by the classes. This accusation sounds orthodox, but you will pardon my saying that it is somewhat superficial. In reality, if we consider a true proletarian, it is evident that the freedom of his activities and of his class should naturally coincide.

What is individual freedom ? In this case our point of view is Hegelian, invariably resting on a dialectical-materialistic foundation. A free man is a person whose behaviour coincides with the very essence of his being. If my freedom did not correspond with my character, it would be a strange situation indeed ! Free actions must correspond with one's convictions and feelings. (A proletarian's freedom, by the way, may be hindered through his backwardness and his lack of education. Therefore when a proletarian becomes enlightened through education, he discovers and broadens his true self. His personality becomes freer, at the same time still belonging to his class. The party discipline, which he accepts, is as the very air which he breathes. The more disciplined a member of the party, the freer he is.)

Now let us consider the individuality of the intelligentsia. This is not only a merely bourgeois individuality, but also an individuality that spends itself in perfecting its own being. . . . Originality, for a writer, lawyer, doctor, painter, engineer, or other intellectual is the greatest gift

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that he can possess. . . . And in precisely this lies his talent. There also exists among the intellectuals a competition in originality. In the process of development of this competition the intellectual suffers purely personal complications. . . . An intellectual thinks that his " sensitiveness " is a sign of highly developed individuality. But this is just as false as to consider as a quality the noises made by an expensive automobile while in motion. . . .

There are many threads that bind an intellectual, especially a European intellectual, to his bourgeois environment. . . . How can such an intellectual (and in Europe 99 per cent. are of this type) tear himself away from such a situation and approach the proletarian ? I can assure you that he can do it only through the development of the greatest individual freedom. . . .

Let us suppose that the intellectual does not at once find the communistic road. This will still be his first honest refusal to serve the bourgeois idols—to oppose them through his desire to be truthful to himself. This alone will bring our " Doctor Stockman " into conflict with the society in which he lives. It may take him some time to discover that there exists a society that will support him in his convictions, a society in which he will have a chance to develop, namely, the revolutionary proletariat. But in the beginning he will suffer from a deep feeling of loneliness. He will come to the conclusion that outside of this society there are many other spheres, some good and some bad, in which he can spend himself, but the essential thing is that at last he is developing his true individuality. This culmination, which calls for sacrifice, brings him to the summit of his self-esteem. . . .

So how can Romain Rolland help being proud of such individualism ? How can he refrain from speaking of freedom as of something truly noble ? Now tell me, friends Gladkov and Selvinsky : if Romain Rolland did not believe in individual freedom, would he not be forced to believe the alternative, that a man can only express the interests of his class and no more ? In this case he would be forced to remain, according to Pereversev, within the frame of his class, forever a bourgeois. And Romain Rolland does not want that.

Lenin has said that everyone has his own way of arriving at communism. Thus the road of an intellectual leads through highly moral social individualism and scientific freedom of thought. And this requires a strong character.

It is a road to freedom through freedom, the highest type one can attain. This freedom is no longer individualistic, because it harmoniously coincides with the requirements of the class. Romain Rolland, with a somewhat ironical smile, tells Gladkov and Selvinsky that Communists, not themselves realising it, are " true individualists." This is not true,

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my friend. We Communists are great individualists, fully aware of it. And you, our friend, you fully understand our individualism. . . . Individualism grows to a colossal stature when it works hand in hand with the great social movement of its time. . . .

We are well aware that our struggle produces tremendous individualities. Surely we would laugh to scorn any person who tried to maintain that Marx, Lenin, or Stalin were not very outstanding individualities. We also know that the socialistic order will create varied and strong personalities, although there will be no conflict or competition between them over a career, which some bourgeois consider a necessary condition for individualism.

The same misunderstanding arises when we come to consider love for humanity. From Romain Rolland's letter it is evident that he despises scoundrels and fools who want to hide the class struggle from the new humanity. No, there does not exist at the present time an undivided humanity. There is a gigantic class struggle between two consciously hostile camps, the camp of the leaders of the bourgeoisie and their lackeys, and the camp of the proletariat and their followers. Lenin pointed out more than once that with the natural development of sharper class conflicts there will gather around the banner of communism hundreds of millions of men, and around the flag of capitalism there will remain a small group of exploiters and their servants. In this respect we speak in the name of humanity. We only deny the exploiters the right to be considered as a part of humanity, for they are its enemies. And they must be liquidated as a class. Socialism will lead to the annihilation of classes, and thus to the complete realisation of humanity.

We do not have to build up contradictions between such people as Romain Rolland and ourselves. . . . My dear friend, we love your personality, which is so distinctly different from that of the intellectuals you have described in " Liluli." We welcome your freedom, which permitted you to protest proudly against the idols of European public opinion. We know that you want to serve humanity. We know that you are beginning to absorb completely the truth, that one can serve humanity only by giving oneself wholly to the proletariat through its revolutionary, communistic vanguard.

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OUR CONFERENCE REPORT

OUR Conference of LABOUR MONTHLY readers took place at Swinton House, Grays Inn Road, London, on December 13th, 1931, at 3 p.m. It closed, with a break for tea—6–7 p.m.—at 10 p.m.

There were over two hundred readers present. Unfortunately, very many were turned away, the conference being packed out and many having to stand a considerable time.

Comrade **R. O. Bridgeman** in opening the conference from the chair, laid stress on the fact that it was a conference of active members of the working class, who in the new stage of the world crisis saw the need of a full and free discussion to thrash out the present and new issues arising.

Comrade Bridgeman read out a letter from Comrade **R. P. Dutt,** which had been sent to the Conference. Our aim, he wrote, was to reach as far as possible common ground on how to mobilise the workers' class front in order to meet the crisis. The greatest danger confronting LABOUR MONTHLY readers was the danger of "learned passivity," that distortion of Marxism which is merely content to observe and analyse events and fails to understand that the essence of Marxism is the active development of the existing struggle. The present crisis has shown the falsity of all capitalist reconstruction theories. Because it has dealt a blow at the Labour theories of progressive capitalist advance and because the organised workers have accepted these theories there is confusion in the working class, as well as a process of revolutionisation. The conditions of the workers' fight are at present still conditions of a defensive and even of an unsuccessful defensive, at a moment when the conditions of capitalist bankruptcy call urgently for the workers' offensive. This is the heart of the present problem.

The reformists are trying to continue and to transform their theories in terms of the crisis. The crisis itself is no British crisis alone, its development is one of accelerating rapidity on a world scale and ever widening in scope. The discussion must range around: what are the workers discussing, how far have they been reached by the militants' slogans? What is further needed? It must be remembered that only a small fraction have been drawn into activity and that a large volume of discontent has not yet found expression. What are the conditions, the demands that will get action? What are the forms to get action?

The heart of the revolutionary understanding of the crisis is the unity of the revolutionary and the immediate struggle. Only when we are able to show the single path forward, the path of the workers' fight on every penny and every issue of the capitalist attack as the only path forward to the final overthrow of capitalism—in short, to at once to give a lead in the immediate struggle and explain it in its revolutionary significance are we beginning to achieve our revolutionary task in the crisis.

Comrade **H. C. Stevens,** then opened on the Economic Crisis. He spoke of the necessity of avoiding the divorce between theory and practice. For the Marxist the abandonment of the gold standard was simply the latest outcome

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of the crisis which had been developing over years. The issues were obscured by all kinds of theories—the Bankers' ramp cry of the Labour Party, the financial crisis theories of the I.L.P., the industrialists proclaiming that the bankers were the cause, while the bankers said it was an industrial crisis. Two fundamental Marxist propositions concern us: the growing intensification and recurrent nature of capitalist crises and the continually growing contrast between the wealth of the capitalists and the poverty of the workers.

The conflict between the old-established British imperialism and the newer imperialisms lead to the world war which, however, left British imperialism worse off and faced with new competitors. The struggle to regain its position was expressed in the struggle to return to the gold standard. But that return was on a false basis and with the development of the world economic crisis British capitalism could no longer hold the ground regained and the gold standard went by the board; its abandonment represents the latest stage in British imperialism's decline.

Three main theories are held out for British capitalism: Return to the gold standard; no return is possible in the immediate future. Re-stabilisation at a lower rate, but only in relation to external factors and, besides, a new re-stabilisation might again become necessary. Thirdly, a managed currency. But this can't be done except in relation to the actual economic situation. Currency being a function of circulation only, it is therefore impossible to make it a controlling factor for capitalism as a whole. A currency, as Marx pointed out, must stand in relation to gold for its international needs. On the other hand the gold standard, because of its nature, is itself a barrier to the development of capitalism, a barrier which it is always trying, in vain, to leap over. A managed currency is a medium between going rapidly downhill or returning to the gold standard; a managed currency is a stagnant remedy preventing further development leading to new crises arising from the stagnation. The real world crisis was not financial; that was merely a superficial manifestation of the capitalist crisis and therefore no financial tinkering could bring us forward to socialism. The question was one of life or death for capitalism and not one of its financial superstructure. The basic fact was the class struggle and the need for a frontal attack on the whole of capitalism for its overthrow, and not on one of its sections, as the only way out for the workers from the present crisis.

Comrade **W. Rust**, as the second opener, dealt with the Political Situation. We are living, he said, in a historical period when great events are taking place so tremendous that we, who are very close to them, often fail to realise their meaning. Invergordon, going off gold, the Red Armies' triumph in China, the Irish dictatorship, all have their bearing on the situation. The crisis is deepening in spite of the National Government's unsuccessful attempts to get out of it. The capitalist dictatorship is becoming more open, pointing to Fascism, which is a more violent form of the same dictatorship. Gradualism is a method of supporting capitalism and of advancing Fascism, differing only from the open liberal and conservative policies by its thin veneer of socialist phrases. The Labour Party asserts that it is the lesser evil or, as the *Daily Herald* suggests, the National Government is a lesser evil than the Page- Croft wing: therefore do not let the Government fall into their hands. This is done by the Labour Party to conceal the basic issue of the dictatorship of the workers or the capitalists.

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Social-Democracy is relying more and more on the petty bourgeoisie. The decline in the Labour vote at the Election has a revolutionary significance, but at the same time conservatism was strengthened and this fact exposes our still great weakness. The situation is very dangerous for, as Marx and Lenin have shown, capitalist collapse is not automatic unless the revolutionary working class succeed in destroying the power of the capitalists. We must organise the workers' counter-offensive. The "left" leaders want quicker gradualism; they complain of the super-gradualism of the Labour Party just as though when you are building a house it mattered if you put one or two bricks on at a time when the foundations are completely rotten.

The fight organised round the immediate demands of resistance to the capitalist offensive must be made at the same time the method of preparing the working class for the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. Three aims can be set: first, a relentless struggle against all ideas for patching up capitalism; secondly, there should be no retreat in the daily fight against capitalism, as through resistance develops the masses' revolutionary experience. Thirdly, every event in the struggle, however small, should be generalised and so explain the struggle's meaning; for instance, Invergordon, not simply as a sailor's revolt, but as showing capitalism's instability and the fundamental interests of the armed forces and the civilian population. As the unity of employed and unemployed remains the fundamental question, it is necessary to devise practical steps whereby unity can be built up.

We must attract trade unionists to attend branch meetings and recreate the life of the trade union movement in a revolutionary sense by mobilising the masses against the policy of the officials. The immediate demands of "Not a Penny Off" need remoulding to be closer to the present situation; they must be at once practical and the basis for a united front. Finally, he said, fatalism has no place in the teachings of Marxism. What we do to-day is worth a hundred times what we do to-morrow. The workers who are turning from gradualism to revolutionary struggle can be helped forward at a tremendous rate provided revolutionary-minded workers display the utmost energy and place themselves in the struggle's forefront.

Comrade **W. Warbey** said that both the C.P. and I.L.P. agreed that the control of the means of production and distribution by the workers could only be achieved by revolutionary action. There was need to organise a broad united front movement. The cessation of attacks made by one party or another was first necessary. Unfair attacks have been made at this Conference; the I.L.P. was just as desirous as the C.P. for the overthrow of capitalism and the workers' seizure of power. What methods are we to use for the destruction of capitalism? Civil war has been spoken of; it is the arming of the workers against the capitalist state: but this is impossible as we have to take into consideration the tremendous progress in military technique; when a revolutionary Government is established though, we can use force against the counter-revolution. The spreading of strike action was correct and the non-payment of rent and income tax, &c. The LABOUR MONTHLY should call an open conference of the leaders of the C.P. and I.L.P. and there should be a discussion on the formation of a British Socialist Workers' Party.

Comrade **K. Taylor** said we must expose the I.L.P. and Labour Party leaders as the most dangerous enemies of the workers (cheers and shouts of tripe). The Labour Party is losing its hold over the workers; they realise

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this and will do all in their power to regain their confidence. We must put forward the slogan of increased wages.

Comrade **Stanley** wanted to put forward the view of a Cambridge group, which did not believe in speaking. We must have a policy which will make the working class feel for themselves. They must not look upon themselves as inferior to the capitalist class, but realise that they are superior.

Comrade **L. Kay** said he came nearly 200 miles (from Barnsley) to attend the conference. His first impression was one of seething contradictions. We all are agreed that capitalism is breaking down, but the question was how to get out of the crisis. This will only be done if we follow the single path as stated in Comrade Dutt's letter. We could not work inside the trade unions as we had done in the Labour Party. There was not the slightest hope of doing it. The workers should be in one revolutionary movement. At present unnecessary effort was being devoted to attending meetings of all kinds: C.P., M.M., F.S.U., &c. We must concentrate attention on a revolutionary trade union movement that would give support to the workers. It was no good talking of revolution in the abstract. Unless we can get an industrial lead from this Conference it will be useless.

Comrade **Cox** recalled attention to the fact that in Britain, capitalism being the oldest in the world, there was a lack of a clear conception of what capitalism really was and how to fight for socialism; the small reforms policy of the Labour Party was typical, but to-day the artificial barriers between reform and revolution have been swept away. If the issue to-day is as Engels said, "Rebel or Starve," then the workers must not think of how to support capitalism. The main issue to-day is how can the workers join on the ground of immediate demands such as "Down with the Means Test": these are revolutionary demands to-day as capitalism is compelled to take desperate measures to save itself.

Comrade **Cameron Sloan** considered a united front ought to be possible amongst those who had revolutionary aims and were against the parliamentary methods of the reformists. In the I.L.P. rank-and-file there are many prepared to support revolutionary aims, but they are antagonised by the "unfair criticism" in the *Daily Worker*. He suggested that Invergordon proved that probably we would have such support in the armed forces that no civil war would be waged against us. He agreed with Comrade Kay that a single path was needed. He was against sending representatives to Parliament, but advocated individual propaganda; he suggested the LABOUR MONTHLY or *New Leader* should draw up a questionnaire and engage their readers to present it to a definite number of other workers. He advocated that there should now be developed, through research groups, &c., a constructive planning of the life of the country after the seizure of power; this was the function of the Conference apart from uniting the revolutionary front.

Comrade **J. W. Bentley** said the issue was the attainment of power and to achieve the revolution. We cannot wait till we educate the majority of workers. It is fairly certain that we will sink to the starvation level varying in scale from the unemployed to that outer fringe of workers outside the trade unions—the small shopkeepers, &c. Large masses will starve. There will be a demand for bread, though dissociated from revolutionary philosophy.

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But as satisfaction will not be possible it will be a revolutionary demand. He suggested organisations to give expression to these views; they must be decentralised yet have a central unity; they should include workers and the public at large who unite in a demand for bread or for peace in case of an imperialist war; he said this form of organisation guarantees against leaders who would mislead the workers.

Comrade **B. J. Boothroyd** thought it was impossible to disagree with the I.L.P. because you cannot disagree with a body which does not agree with itself. There are, it is true, an increasing number who ought to be in the Communist Party and will not realise their work until they are there. A form of activity rather than organisation was needed with the object of teaching Marxism. The decent socialists in the I.L.P. are now leaving their leaders, are becoming revolutionary minded and very eager for revolutionary teaching. Taking the point about civil war made by Comrade Warbey, he said that it was an expression of an ideology which has not yet learnt what the working class is. What will be the position of the working class in six months' time? Is it better to sit at home and face the means test or go out and be shot at? This question is for the workers to decide. We should consider further the uniting in Marxist teaching all those in other bodies outside the C.P. who are definitely revolutionary but who will not be with us until they know what it is we stand for.

Comrade **Gunawardena** dealt first with the crisis in the colonies. How the going off gold had meant a rise in the prices of the peasants' necessities while the gold prices of their products were still falling; the agrarian crisis has become intensified. The crisis had meant that the small concessions which British imperialism might have been prepared to make to the Indian bourgeoisie are no longer possible; at the same time the peasantry, because of the increased crisis, are turning away from the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The I.L.P. and Labour Party have their counterpart in the Indian National Congress in India, which, like the other two bodies, tries to prevent the workers from getting into revolutionary channels. The colonial workers must link up their struggles with the workers in the imperialist countries who, in turn, must free themselves from reformist illusions.

Comrade **Oldfield** said that it was necessary in the present changed situation to take account of the point of view of the other class and how far they were prepared to drive back the working class to break their rising militancy. While there can be no co-operation between Social-Democratic and revolutionary parties, at the same time we always hold out the hope that the workers in the I.L.P. will gain experience of the actual situation. When in marching to some central governing body these workers are often to be seen on the outside of the crowd, but very seldom do workers go amongst them and talk to them in their own particular language. The future is going to depend not on revolutionary theories but on revolutionary work. The challenge of the other class can best be met by proving to these workers, particularly industrial workers, that only upon the basis of organisation can they demonstrate what actually can be done.

Comrade **Bert Williams.** This Conference can clear up the fallacies and expose the remedies put forward by the reformists. We are in a period of proletarian revolution. We are living in the midst of a revolutionary crisis. We must counter-attack against the capitalist repressive measures. Britain

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was knocked off the gold standard: the gold standard itself is part of the capitalist system and expresses its class relationships. As to the I.L.P. we can recall the similar situation in the revolutionary period immediately after the war when the Two-and-a-half International was formed. Afterwards they dropped back into the Second International. But again, to-day in Germany the same elements as the I.L.P. are trying, by the formation of a Socialist Labour Party, to play the same rôle as the I.L.P. does here.

Comrade **Collick** said there were many Marxists outside the C.P. in this country. Marxists must not lose contact with the working class movement from which in too many cases the C.P. is too far removed. Referring to the Election he said that the whole problem was that the vote which the Labour movement is losing is going over to reaction. There is too much concentration on thrashing personalities. The attacks against Jimmy only increased his influence, and when he lost his influence it was because those attacks had ceased. He wanted to speak against Comrade Kay from Barnsley. While in certain industries like mining it may be good to start revolutionary unions; this should not be done indiscriminately in the trade union movement. If you start new unions in the crisis to-day, then you will not get the united front. Then referring to the greater importance of the general mass of ordinary labour men and women in the ordinary labour movement than, for instance, the I.L.P., he said: they do not know where they are. Referring to the Allison-Shepherd case, he said our business is to create a great agitation and make it widely known how they were treated to long sentences by means of deliberate agents provocateurs. We ought to be doing something to bring the facts of this home in order to harmonise the working class feeling in the forces with industry.

Comrade **Helen Crawford** said that the present crisis of capitalism offers an opportunity for the workers in the I.L.P. to unite with other movements and members of the C.P. The Communist Party by its attacks sometimes repels workers whom it could otherwise attract. Where does the I.L.P. stand on the Indian question? There are 60,000 Indians in jail, but she never saw workers in the I.L.P. calling protest meetings against this. Many were dead sick of talk and were prepared to act. It was necessary, she repeated, to bring workers nearer the revolutionary movement, not to repel them.

Comrade **Mahon** considered that an analysis of the Workers' Charter campaign would be useful in the present situation in which the capitalists were putting across the cuts. The Workers' Charter Campaign, while it brought 500,000 to the point of endorsing the Charter when the cuts were actually launched, where was this half-a-million and the organisation, too. The reasons for this failure were, firstly, that the demands were treated too much as mere propaganda and not as a means of mobilising action, resulting in no organisation being developed. Secondly, the demands were too general; thirdly, the factories and trade unions were untouched by the campaign. Amongst workers two difficulties appear to-day: lack of leadership and of organisation. The united front won't be built up between the branches of the C.P. and I.L.P., but at the point of conflict. It is necessary to know how to take up the demands, *e.g.*, of the cotton workers and the other questions of rent and prices as well. There was too much of generalities in the LABOUR MONTHLY and too little application of Marxism to the industrial struggle.

Comrade **Gillett** suggested that the old theory which we have associated with Marxism that the revolution is just around the corner may not be correct.

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I do not think that conditions are actually leading up to a revolutionary situation. He suggested that practical work in the trade union movement was necessary; it is based solely on the class idea—people who are exploited, joined together to recover what has been taken from them. The divorce of any socialist movement from the trade union movement prevents it from having any hopes of success.

Comrade **Cons.** The immediate steps after taking over power ought to be considered at this stage, such as the taking over of the B.B.C. and Fleet Street. We must have some system to ensure that bread comes into the workers' shops. A revolution will succeed or fail as to whether you are successful in the first few months. If you fail in the services of this country the people will flock into counter-revolutionary organisations.

Comrade **Felton** said there were also in the Labour Party, as well as in the I.L.P., a large number of people who have got that feeling of revolutionary discontent; if they had a lead they might be attracted into the C.P. How can you direct all these points of discontent? Will an organisation be necessary? It is said that the propaganda of the Communists is all wrong; if that is so it would mean a complete change which would tend to whittle down the revolutionary content of the *Daily Worker*. What is needed is to create and foster that feeling of discontent and get among broader masses of workers.

Comrade **W. Rust,** in replying to the discussion, suggested that the particular questions between the I.L.P. and the C.P. could be answered in the respective newspapers as they had nothing to do with the problems of the working class. Taking up Comrade Collick's point, he said, policies cannot be dissociated from personalities. As regards Thomas, it was rather the year's preparatory work of exposure which assisted his removal. The united front is not a question of the relation of the I.L.P. and C.P., but the building up of the workers' unity in their struggle against the capitalist offensive on the basis of demands that will unite the widest masses of workers and at the same time, through the unity achieved in the struggle, enable an advance to be made to a successful fight against the offensive and against the whole capitalist system.

On Civil War, while not for one moment wanting to exclude it from discussion, was it not remarkable that civil war has been concentrated on to the neglect of the practical issues of the day. The discussion came from our heads and not from our mass experience; that is a startling commentary on the stage of the revolutionary working class movement; little or no factory experience partly owing to the composition of the Conference.

Further, very little controversy or real theoretical discussion: hardly a mention of the economic situation, though there are a number of financial questions that could usefully be discussed. We answer the workers' struggle with generalities, but fail to generalise from the struggle.

Comrade Collick was wrong when he said the workers don't know what to do. There is a distinct change in outlook since twelve months ago—a breakaway from reformism, the beginning of a real revolutionary spirit. It is not correct to say the workers went over to reaction in the election; undoubtedly large numbers came under Conservative influence, but there were also abstentions to a large extent, of numbers of old Labour Party supporters. There was no mass enthusiasm for the National Government.

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On the trade unions: while suggesting that Comrade Collick opposed Comrade Kay from the ordinary trade union standpoint, Comrade Kay's contention that we must leave the trade unions and form new ones is one of those sectarian remarks absolutely fatal in present circumstances. New unions must be discussed. But at the moment everywhere the cry must go out—win the rank-and-file and destroy the bureaucracy's power.

The majority of the workers can be won as they were won in Russia and are being won in Germany; Hitler has not advanced to power because of the fight against Fascism by the Communist Party, showing that Fascism is not an inevitable stage.

Comrade Kay incorrectly makes Comrade Dutt advocate a single organisation when he wrote of the single path forward. Comrade Dutt meant the unity of the revolutionary aim and the immediate struggle.

We need not less, but more discussion to sharpen our wits. Can we answer all the reformist and capitalist arguments? Can we explain the tremendous complexity of the situation? This is only the beginning of discussion.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' STRUGGLE IN HISTORY.

The Strike on the Dredging Fleet, 1905, by Peter Nikiforov.
Unemployed Councils in St. Petersburg in 1906, by Sergei Malyshev.
Nos. 1 and 2 of *Pages out of Bolshevik History*. (Modern Books Ltd., 1931.) 9d. each.

FOR the romantic revolutionaries—a type which still, unfortunately, persists—the Russian workers' struggle has always been obscured in a misty halo of idealisation. The terroristic exploits of the Social-Revolutionaries, the hair-breadth escapes of political prisoners, the high lights of 1905 and 1917 are their favourite theme, but the desperate, day-to-day fights of the workers for better conditions, the struggle among the parties to retain and gain leadership of the masses are ignored as too prosaic to be interesting. To all such high-faluting conceptions of revolution these two booklets come as a wholesome corrective. Their simple, matter-of-fact narration tells of the spade-work by which the Russian workers' movement was built up.

Peter Nikiforov's story is almost in itself a manual for the industrial agitator. Without any considerable theoretical training, he was accustomed to take the right line based on a sound sense for the method of attack. Within a few months of 1906 he transformed an absolutely unorganised mass of workers in the port of Kerch and on the dredging fleet into a solidly organised movement that was able to carry out a strike successful in almost every practical demand put forward. He had to achieve this in the face of the local Social-Democratic organisation, largely composed of Mensheviks, under whose instructions he was supposed to be working. "Not being used to factional struggles," he writes, "I could not feel confident and strong with the existing attitude of the party committee towards me; I was afraid that perhaps I might take the wrong road; *yet there was nothing to do but go on.*" The committee wanted to limit its activities to study-circle work and not to take up active work. But he "told the committee that the tactic of organised militant activities would give bigger political results than educational circle work alone."

Very instructive was his method of beginning. He hung around the docks saw the life of the workers, listened to them, began to understand their troubles, and picked out the complaints around which it was possible to organise them. The young workers were the most receptive, but they were imbued with romantic terroristic and conspiratorial ideas of revolution, and they had to be won to a more practical basis for militant activity. The long hours obviously afforded the greatest opportunity for fruitful agitation, but Nikiforov was careful to link the local conditions up with the main struggle of the working class, and with the necessity for becoming politically educated.

Once the young workers had been drawn in and organised it was possible to carry out a shorter-hours stay-in strike, dragging the older men in willy-nilly, and with that successful, the workers were heartened for the big fight for thirty-two demands, including a permanent workers' control committee to provide against victimisation. The fight was won largely owing to Nikiforov's gift for right tactics, and although he was driven out of the district immediately afterwards, he left light-hearted, for his work had ended "in the form of

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an important Bolshevik victory; for even these partial victories gave us strength in those days to carry the struggle further—for the October victory in 1917."

Malyshev's little book deals with a more important sector of the struggle: the fight of the unemployed under Bolshevik leadership to win concessions from the bourgeois Duma in Petersburg, to win soup kitchens, unemployed relief, and construction works. Its story rams home the necessity for studying the workers' primary needs, for seizing on the day-to-day demands and organising around them. The Bolsheviks did not despise the "dirty work" of the class struggle, and it was largely because of the confidence they won among the workers as a result that they became the obvious and only leaders of the revolutionary movement in 1917. As Malyshev says:

"In the course of its two years' existence, the unemployed organisation gave the proletariat a thorough schooling in industrial and economic matters. This organisation, which furnished many leaders, not only taught them to organise production, direct it and achieve success, but it taught them how to fight against the capitalists in everyday problems, even while sitting at the table with them. It taught them how to stick to their independent correct revolutionary line and to attain their class aims." Moreover, the work "was of great educational value for the working masses of St. Petersburg, and now we can say that many of the present leaders of the Soviet Government and of Soviet industry received their first practical lesson at this work. The question of production, of the organisation of production, of technical leadership, &c.—questions which under other conditions could never have arisen—became for the first time practical issues for the proletariat of St. Petersburg."

Although we still have to wait for that thorough Marxist history of the Russian workers' struggle which is so badly needed, these two booklets written by Old Bolsheviks and originally published by the Society of Old Bolsheviks, come as windows through which we can see sections of the real movement and realise the grim fight that went on for years to organise and educate the workers. And like all slices of real life, they contain lesson after lesson for us in the task of organising and educating our own working masses.

H. C. S.

AN OLD ESTABLISHED FIRM.

Industrial Relations, by John Hilton. (Cambridge University Press. 1s. 6d.)

THIS booklet is the inaugural lecture delivered by the Montague Burton Professor of Industrial Relations in Cambridge University. Burton, the big clothing manufacturer chose his man well. The professor's profundities are nothing but arguments in favour of wage reductions, a vulgar rehash of capitalist platitudes. The passage of a few weeks has already killed stone dead Hilton's chief illusion, namely, that going off the gold standard would mean a revival of industrial prosperity. This argument he repeats through his lecture with the simplicity of a Fleet Street journalist acting under orders.

> Nine weeks ago we jumped clear of the international tumbril. It was a nasty fall, but we were soon on our feet, with no more than a few bruises. Prices are rising and that being so, workpeople are going back to work. Employers will make profits where before they made losses. (Page 21.)

Professor Hilton's naïve delight over the abolition of the gold standard is in marked contrast to the gloom of the more responsible leaders of capitalist

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thought who recognised in this event an unavoidable declaration of the approaching collapse of British Imperialism. It would be easy to quote trade figures and capitalist economists (*e.g.*, "We have exchanged one crisis for another," wrote the *Economist* on September 26) in refutation of Hilton, and leave him at that. But the Professor demands a little more attention because his propaganda address represents the type of argument currently used by the leaders of the Labour Party and I.L.P. in order to deceive the workers.

The main burden of Professor Hilton's song is (1) industry is in a state of paralysis because it is under the spell of finance; (2) going off the gold standard means jumping clear of the "international tumbril"; (3) the industrial paralysis is due to a fall in the price level; (4) mass unemployment is not due to the failure of wages to drop as prices dropped (the contribution of Sir Henry Strakosch), but "an unduly high *level* of real wages when stability is reached may leave a stagnant pool of unemployment." (Page 27.)

Hilton therefore concludes that the raising of the price level is the way to revive industry. His ideal is to get back to the 1924 level. "If 1924 be taken as an empiric normality, we can healthily undeflate some 40 points in wholesale prices. . . . You will have realised already what this programme implies: a deflation of real wages of round about 15 per cent." (Page 25.)

How this healthy "undeflation" is to be brought about, the learned professor does not trouble to explain, but the extreme pleasure with which he greets the possibility of higher prices as a consequent of going off the gold standard shows that "undeflation" is only the professional way of advocating inflation of the currency.

Thus the essence of this address is the advocacy of INDIRECT *wage cuts through the artificial raising of the price level.*

In order to reach this conclusion, Hilton strongly stresses that real wages are 17 per cent. above the pre-war level. This lie is typical of the shoddy arguments used throughout the book. Like other apologists of capitalism, Hilton conveniently ignores the depression in the workers' standards caused by mass unemployment, short-time, intensity of labour and bases his conclusion on *weekly rates* and Government cost-of-living figures.

Hilton, is indifferent to the dynamics of capitalism, the inner and external contradictions and the struggle between the classes. The cause of the crisis is the fall in prices, he claims, but he does not bother to enquire into the cause of the price drop. The credit system he waves aside as black magic and refuses to admit that it is the natural superstructure of capitalist production. War debts and reparations and their effect on "industrial relations" come under the all-embracing description of "external forces."

But for all his stupidities it will be noted that Hilton comes to a conclusion (necessity of wage reductions) eminently satisfactory to his employer, Montague Burton. Hilton also has sufficient sense to see that the bourgeoisie "have blundered Europe to the brink of Sovietism, and if they do not better learn to control their magic, it will go. With what we see of capitalist economy before our eyes, and with what we can forsee of the consequences of further bungling, there is a lot to be said for Sovietism; and it will be said and will be listened to." (Page 38.)

Now let us look at how Mr. Burton puts Mr. Hilton's theories into practice. As it is not possible to reduce wages by raising the price level, Burtons Ltd.

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try to achieve their aim by wage cuts, speeding-up, and the introduction of cheap labour. The following reports are taken from the *Daily Worker*

" Recently the Hoffman pressers struck against the attempt of the firm to get them to work two machines instead of one. Not so long ago an attempt was made to get the girls on the Lewis felling machine to accept reductions." (July 17, 1930.)

" While talking about peace outside Burton has been attempting for the last few years to cheapen production inside, but he has always been faced by the militancy of the workers, especially the tailors, who on various occasions have been successful by the use of the strike weapon in stopping the firm from introducing female labour in the tailoring department." (July 9, 1930.)

One final point. Professor Hilton winds up with the advocacy of arbitration and " the development of better machinery for the avoidance of disputes." Burtons Ltd. have already set up machinery, a Works Council with a detailed constitution, including the following wage-cutting clause :

> The adjustment of piece-work rates affected by any variations of the methods of production.

So much for the firm of Hilton and Burton in theory and practice. Bourgeois Cambridge must be delighted with its new professor.

W. R.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE I.L.O.

The International Labour Organisation : the First Decade. Preface by Albert Thomas. (Allen & Unwin. 12s. 6d.)

HERE is a portentous four-hundred page volume giving in meticulous detail the history of the activities of the International Labour Office (I.L.O.) of the League of Nations. The outward semblance and the public functioning of the I.L.O. are painstakingly described in these dry, official pages. The general effect is like that of the old-time " Constitutional History "—an elaborate setting-forth of the forms and mechanisms, but no word as to what moves them, or what is their social and historical role.

The I.L.O. is an integral part of the machinery of the League of Nations, set up under the Versailles treaty system which registered the correlation of forces after the triumph of British and French imperialism over German imperialism. While the League is the diplomatic instrument of the imperialist powers, covering their swashbuckling and war manœuvrings with a " pacifist " cloak, the I.L.O. has a more specialised function : its job is to delude and deceive the workers, to serve as a channel for the infiltration of capitalist ideas into the working class and the labour movement. In doing so the I.L.O. is carrying out the mocking clause of the Peace Treaties which declared that " social justice " is essential for a lasting peace and to that end established the office.

So for a decade the I.L.O. has carried out its elaborate statistical studies and surveys, has piled up information mountains high, has wallowed in a welter of committees and commissions, has issued reports and memoranda that themselves constitute a formidable library, has gone on and on with its interminable convention-spinning. This it has done under the banner of the abolition of " injustice, hardship and privation " and the guaranteeing of " fair and humane conditions of labour " to all. A commentary on its work is supplied

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in full measure by every country of the capitalist world to-day, where never in the memory of living man was there more " injustice, hardship and privation " or more unfair and inhumane conditions of labour.

Even M. Thomas, the director of the I.L.O., notorious and complacent social-patriot, is compelled to strike a certain defensive note in his preface: but this does not stop him from blandly adopting the words of an employers' representative that " the office has found its most fruitful function in promoting and stimulating social progress in every country." This, in a period when capitalism in its death-throes is everywhere struggling madly to save itself by ushering in the blackest social reaction, is an instructive sentiment. Nevertheless it is consistent with the whole line of the I.L.O., which is that under capitalism it is possible by adjustment, agreement, organisation, to introduce " social justice."

And this, of course, is not the line of the I.L.O. alone, but of its faithful henchmen the leaders of the Second International and the International Federation of Trade Unions. Geneva has long been the Mecca of the men of Amsterdam (or Berlin as it is now). Their line is one: and their rôle is one—to confuse and hold back the rising forces of the working class, to put up a smokescreen of class peace propaganda behind which capitalism can wage the class struggle more fiercely, to unite with the capitalist state in a last desperate effort to save their system of exploitation.

This is the reality behind the " objective " recital in this present volume. This is why the International Labour Office, and all its works are, and must be, anathema to the revolutionary working class.

G. A. H.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Indian View. By V. J. Patel. (Friends of India. 30 pp. 3d.)

The Workers' Answer to the Crisis. By R. P. Dutt. (C.P.G.B. 16 pp. 1d.)

The Workers' United Front and the I.L.P. (C.P.G.B. 16 pp. 1d.)

Facts about Russia. Friends of the Soviet Union. (16 pp. 1d.)

Unrest, 1931. Edited by Jack Conroy and Ralph Cheyney. (Henry Harrison. 112 pp. $1.75.)

Sot. By Leonid Leonov. Translated from the Russian by Ivor Montagu and Sergei Nolbandov. (Putnam. 388 pp. 7s. 6d.)

What can we do for England? By Fred H. Cutcliffe. (B. H. Blackwell Ltd., Oxford. 10 pp. 6d.)

Revolt. By the Militant Workers. (League of New Zealand. 2 pp. 1d.)

Bolshevism in Perspective. By J. de V. Loder. (George Allen and Unwin. 255 pp. 12s. 6d.)

Autumn Face. By Malcolm Muggeridge. (Putnam. 286 pp. 7s. 6d.)

Industrial Relations. By John Hilton. (Cambridge University Press. 42 pp. 1s. 6d.)

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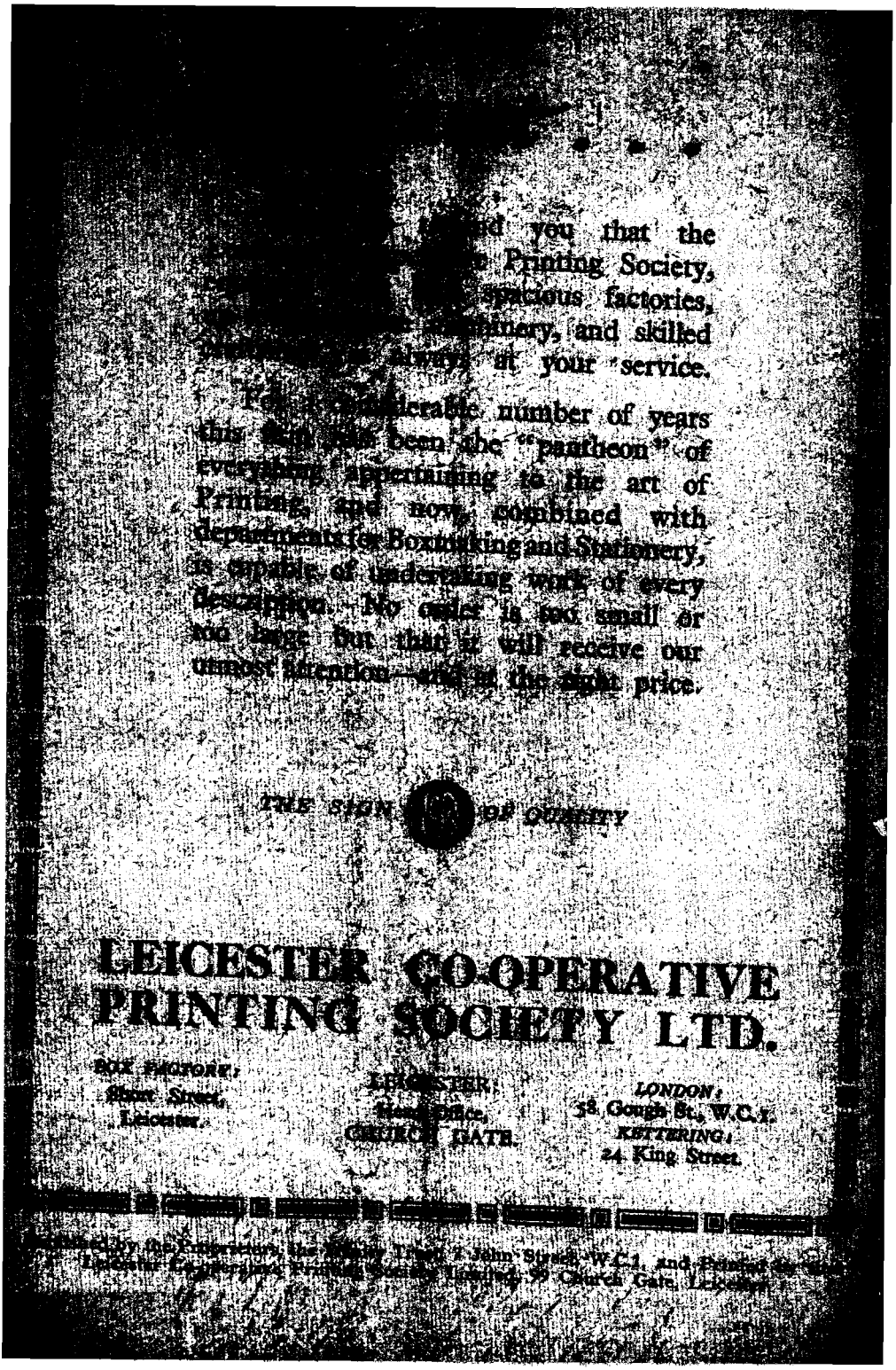

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